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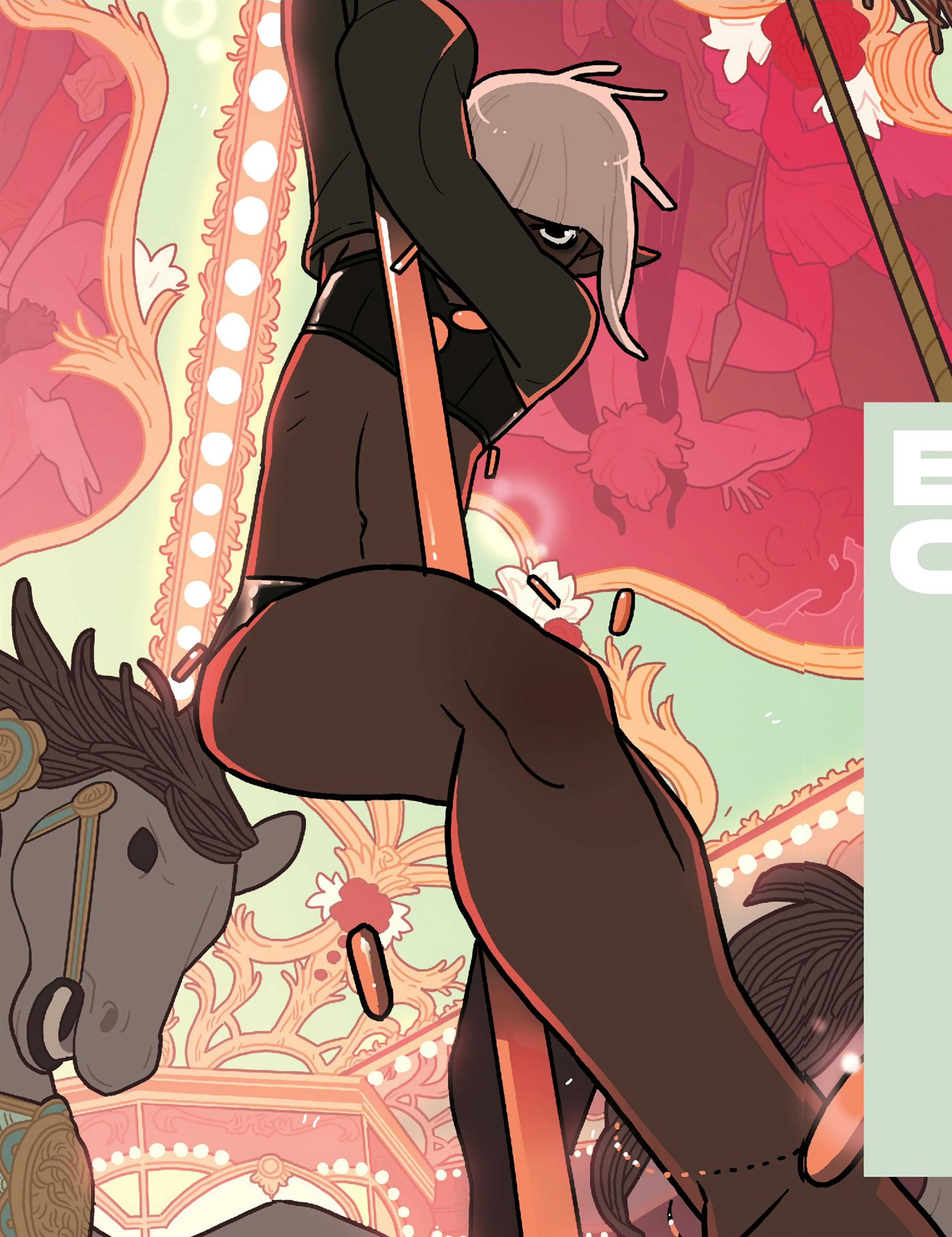
BLACK CLOAK™

VOLUME ONE



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loc. >> 001.01

THE CITY OF KIROS. DAWN.

THE LAST CITY IN
THE KNOWN WORLD.

HUNDREDS OF YEARS
AGO THERE WAS A
WORLD-ENDING WAR.

BUT VICTORY WAS
SNATCHED FROM THE
JAWS OF DEFEAT.

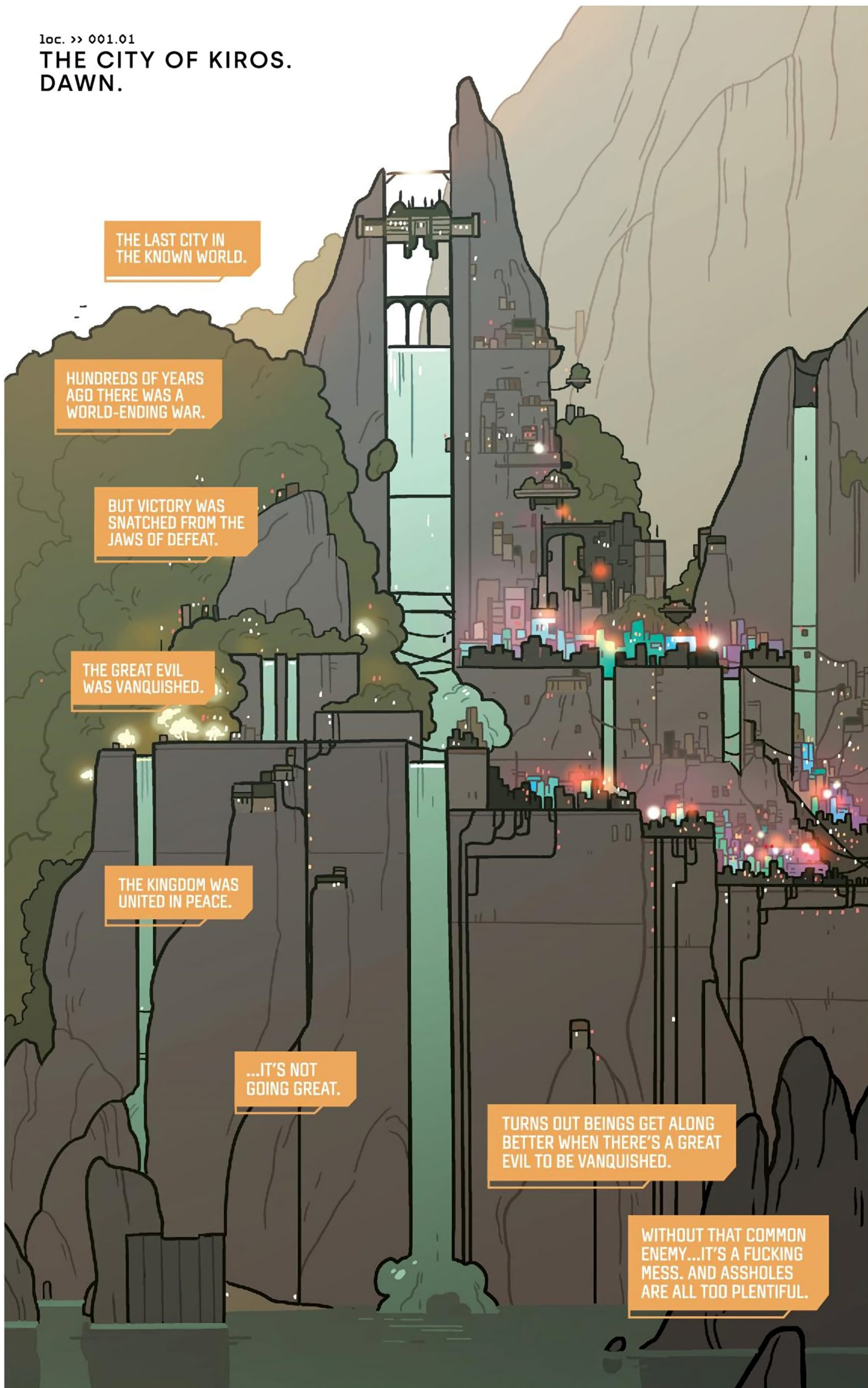
THE GREAT EVIL
WAS VANQUISHED.

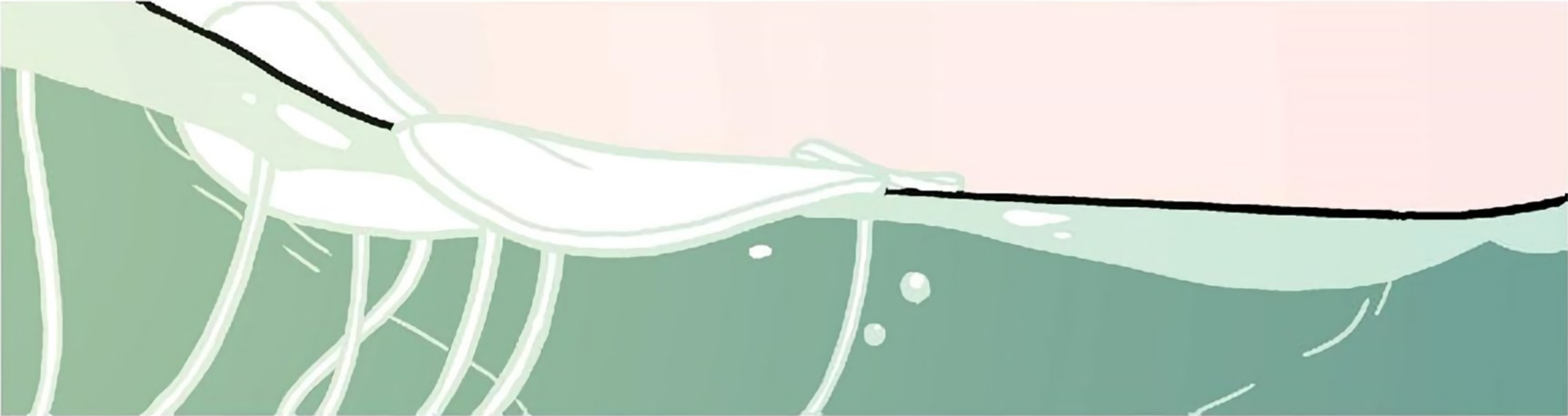
THE KINGDOM WAS
UNITED IN PEACE.

...IT'S NOT
GOING GREAT.

TURNS OUT BEINGS GET ALONG
BETTER WHEN THERE'S A GREAT
EVIL TO BE VANQUISHED.

WITHOUT THAT COMMON
ENEMY...IT'S A FUCKING
MESS. AND ASSHOLES
ARE ALL TOO PLENTIFUL.











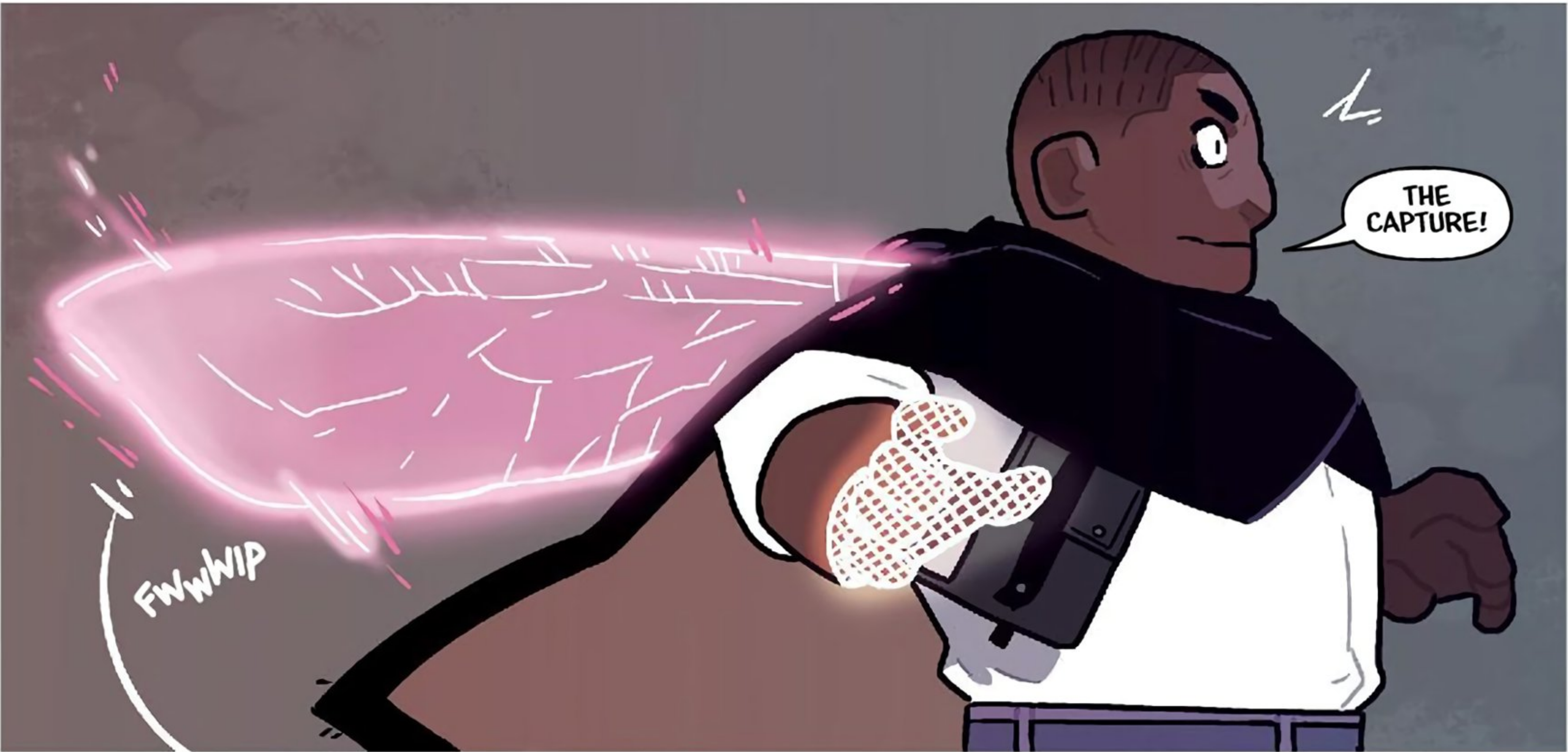


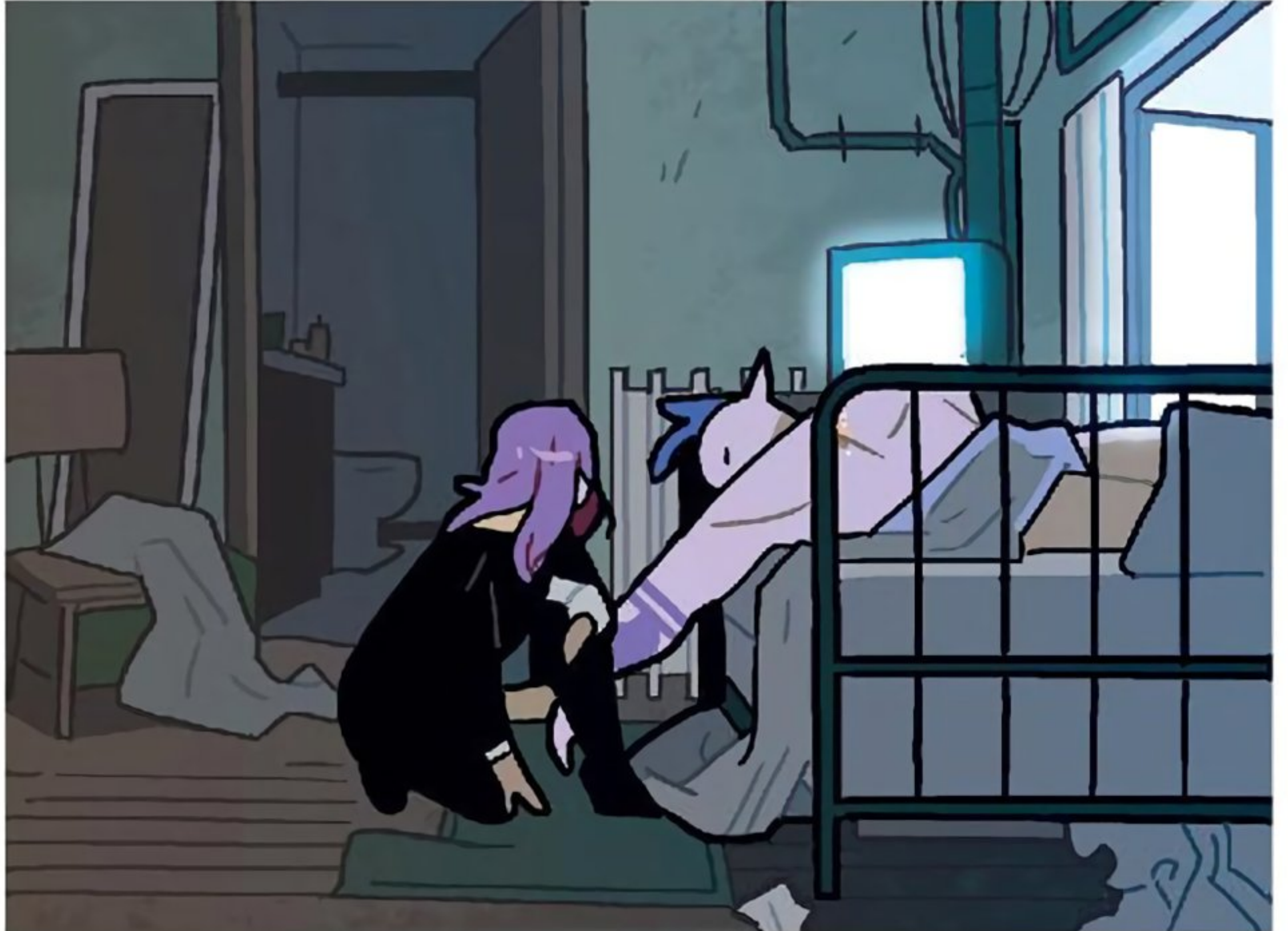


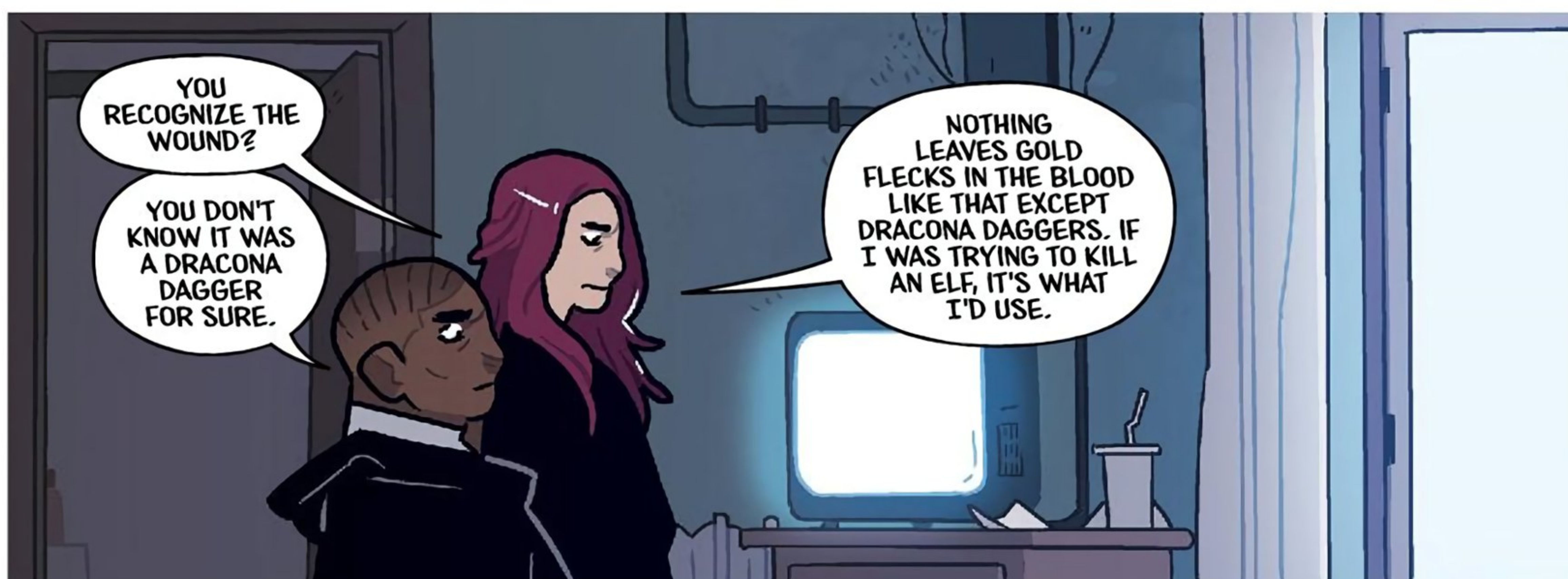
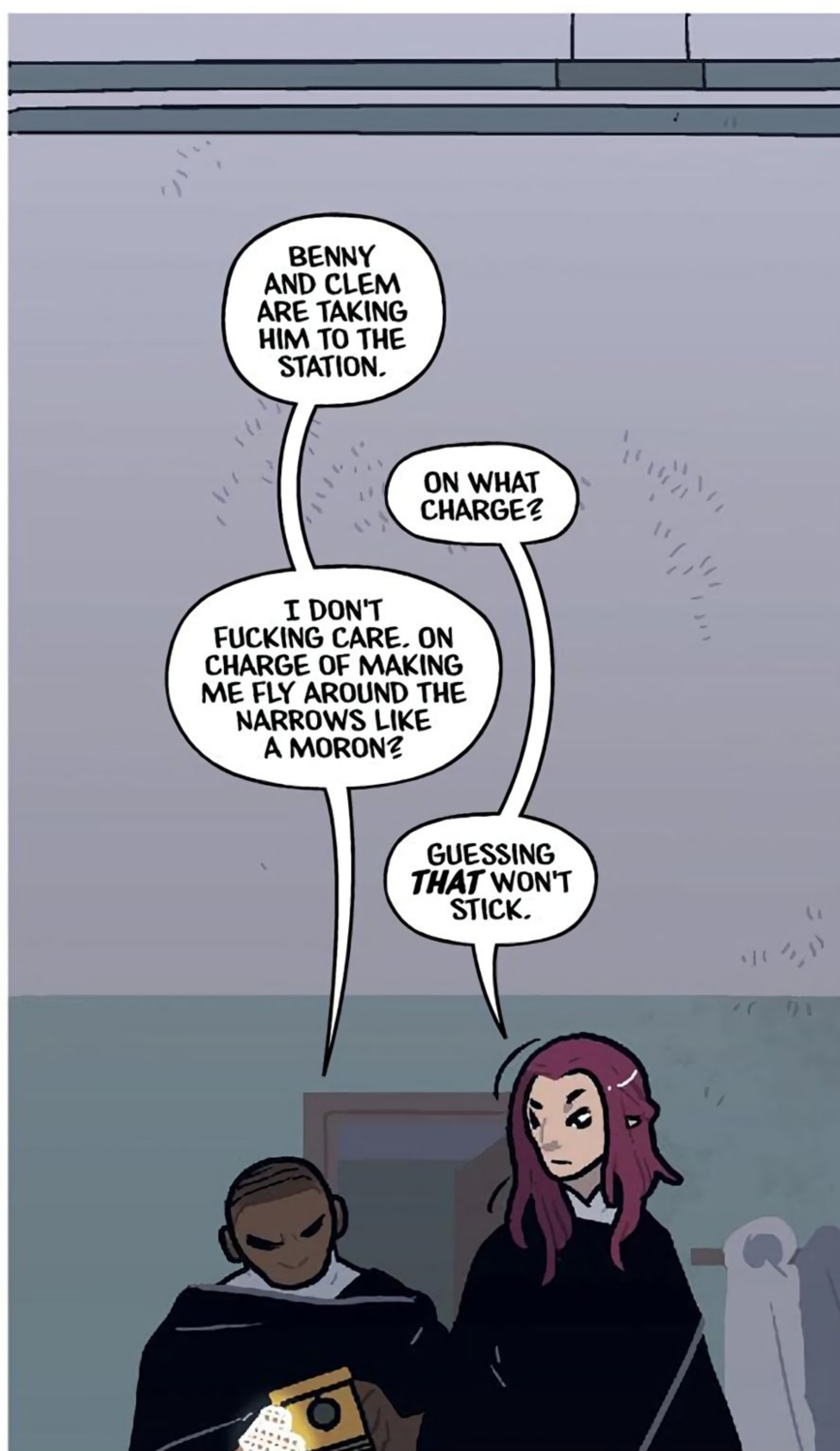




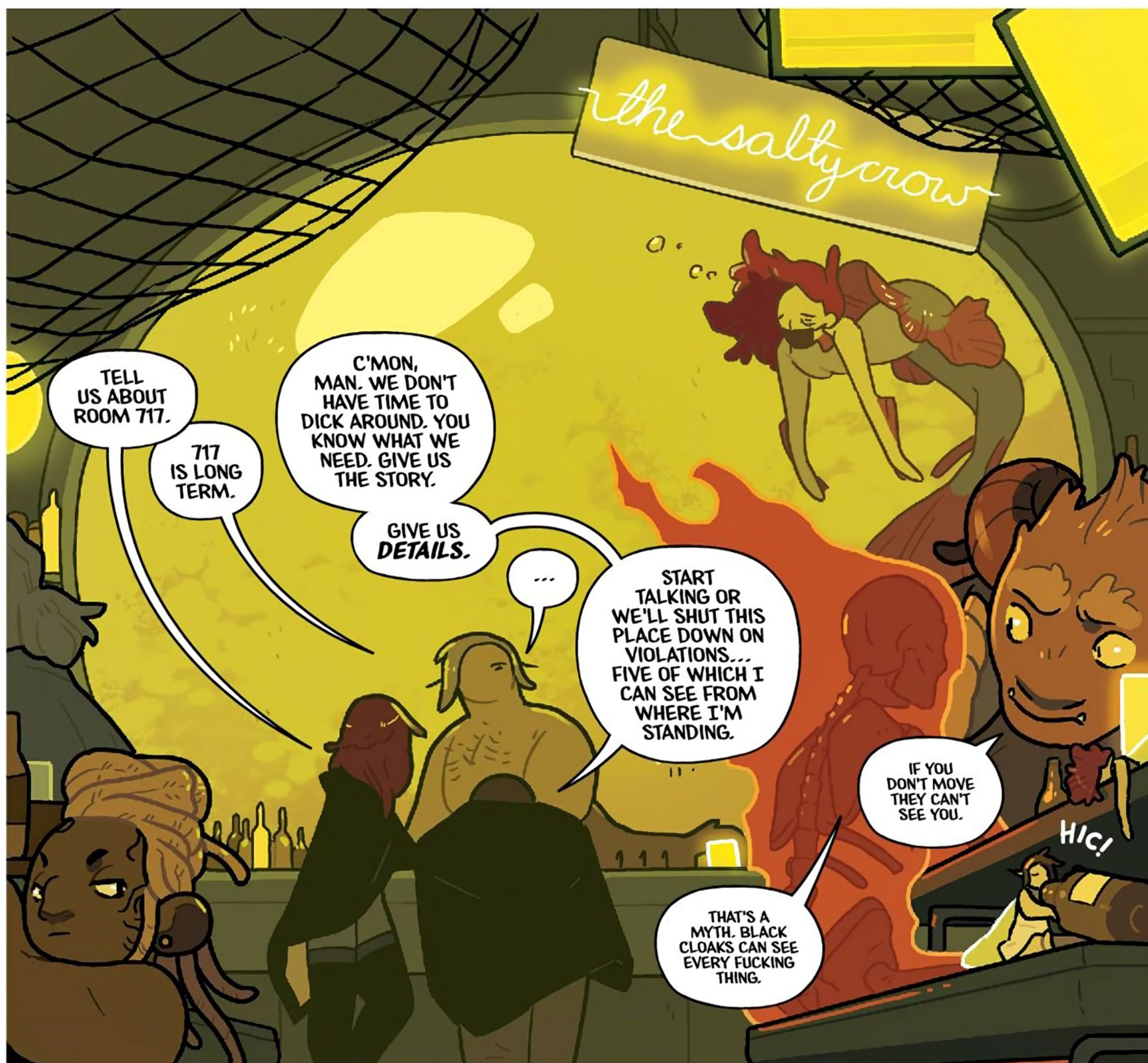




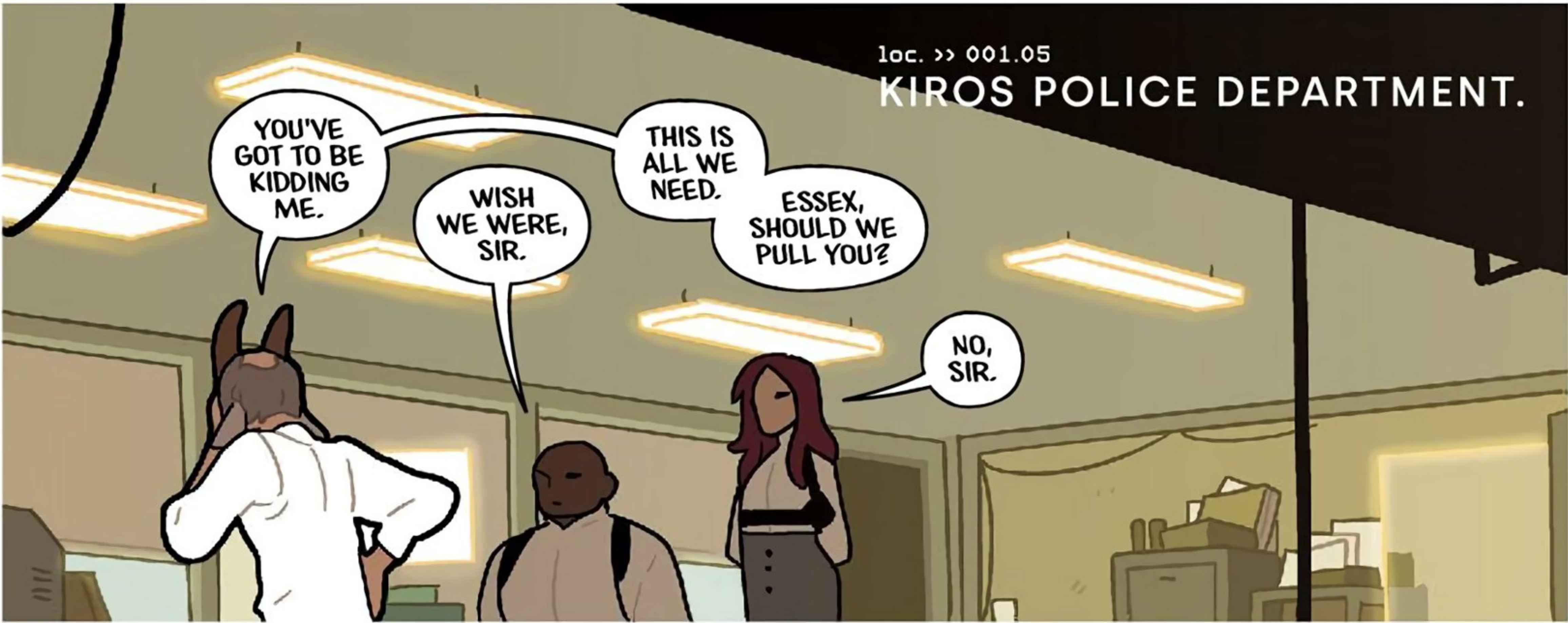


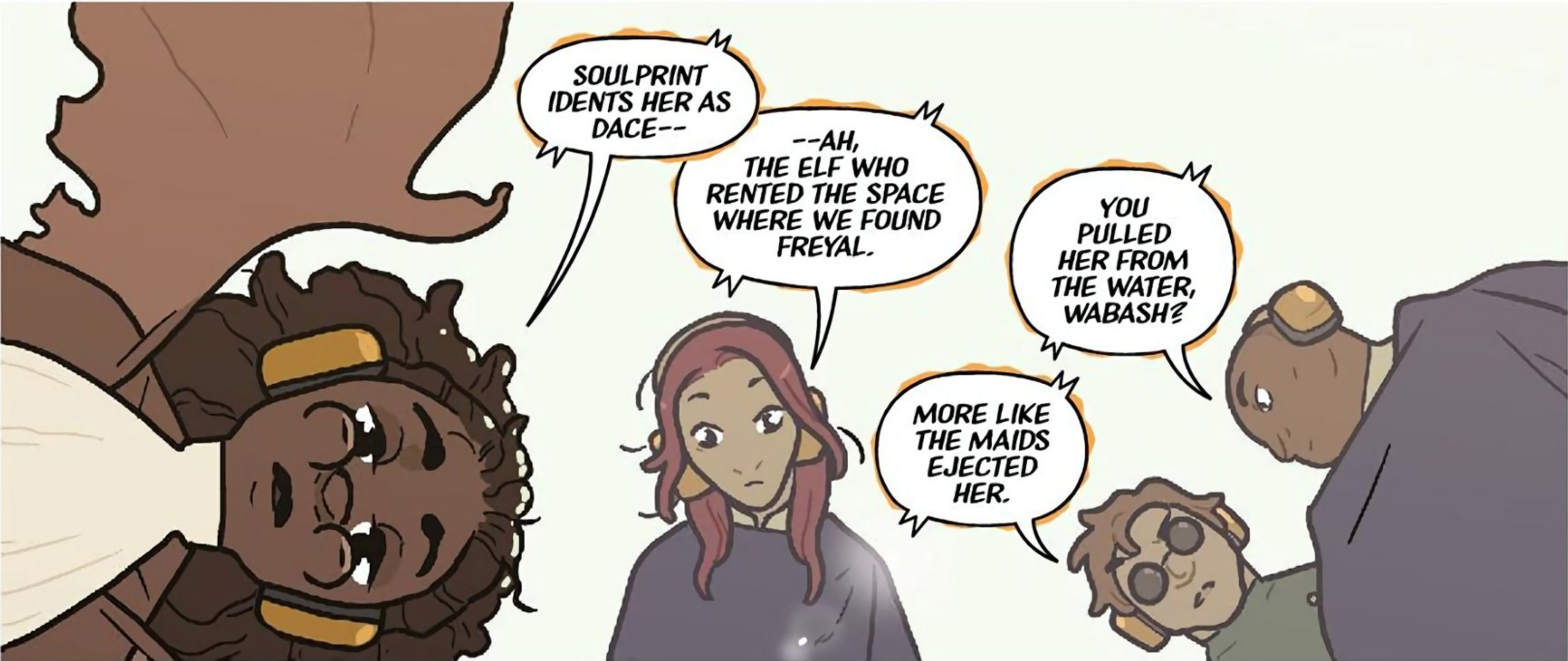






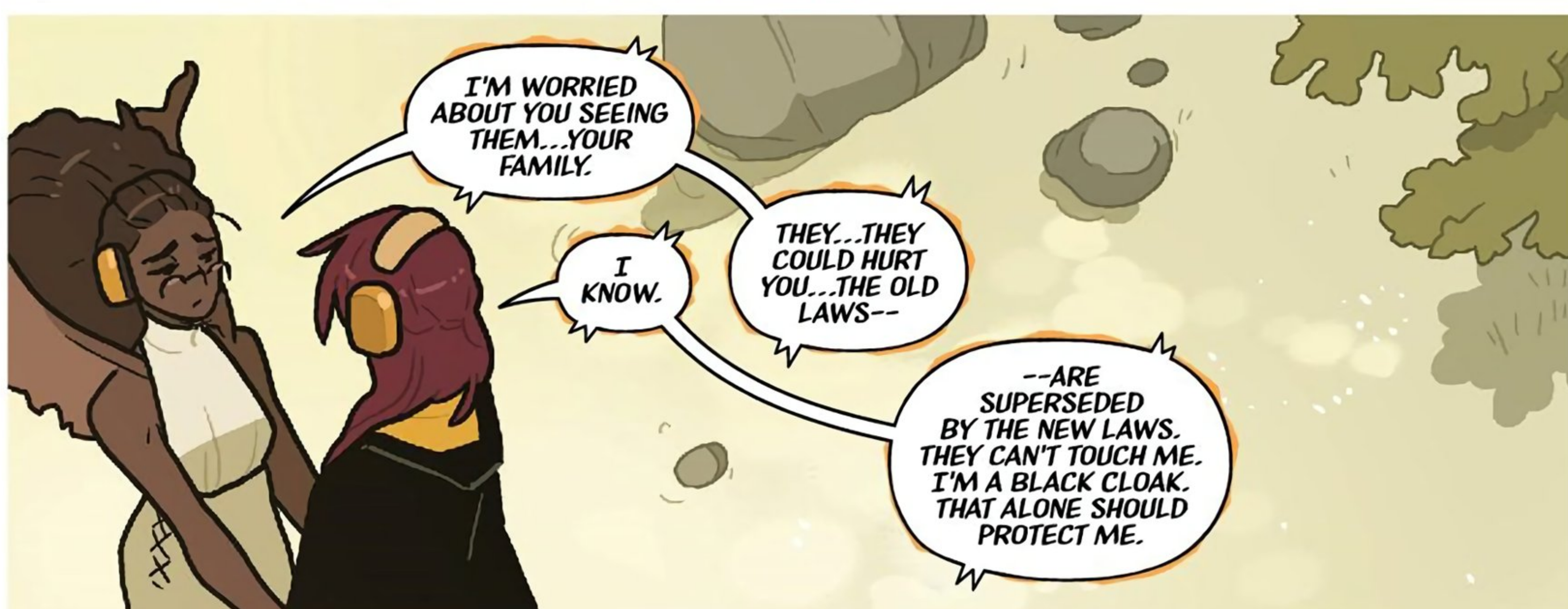


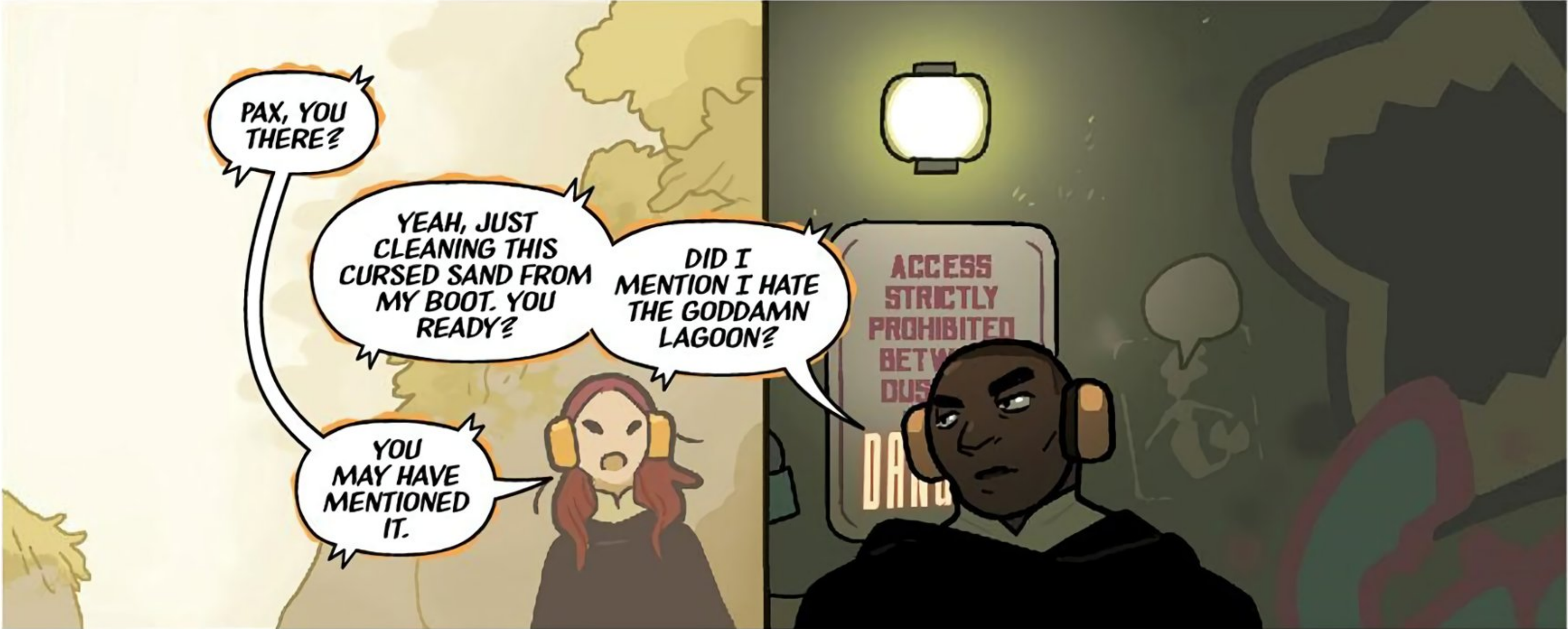
















ALL RIGHT!
TURN IT
BACK
ON!



TOLDJA.

SHIT. ARE
THEY GETTING
LOUDER? SEEMS
LIKE THE WALLS
SHOULD BE BACK
FURTHER IF WE CAN
HEAR THEM FROM
THIS SIDE.

SOME
SAY THEY'RE
GETTING LOUDER.
SOME SAY THEY'RE
LOUDER WHEN
THEY'RE PISSED
OR SAD. I
DUNNO.

CLICK



WHO
WORKED LAST
NIGHT?

EDGAR.

ANY
CHANCE EDGAR
WOULD LET
PEOPLE IN?

NO WAY.
SURVEILLANCE
ALL AROUND
HERE. THEY DON'T
TRUCK WITH THAT
SHIT, THEY'LL FIRE
YOU ON THE
SPOT.



BUT
PEOPLE GET
IN, THEY ALWAYS
DO, RIGHT?

I GUESS.

SO WHERE
DO YOU GO IF
YOU WANT TO
SNEAK IN?

MAYBE THE
EDGE OF THE WALL,
WHERE IT MEETS THE
CLIFFS. SOMETIMES
THERE'S A GAP.



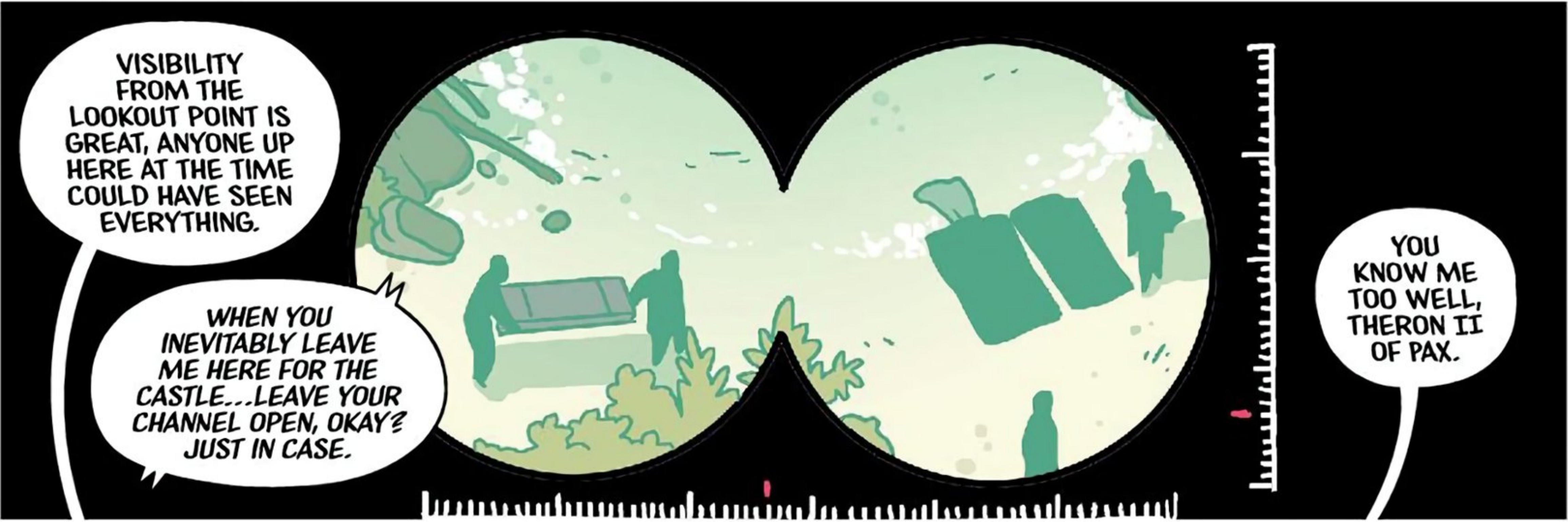
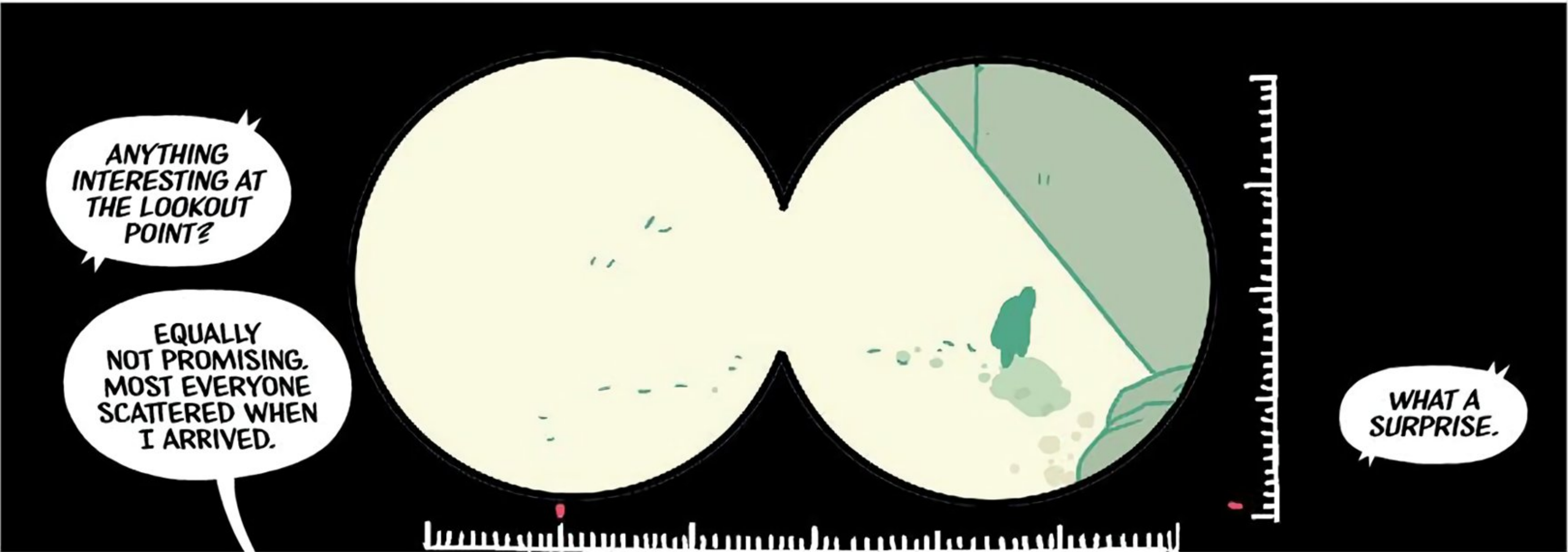
SOMETIMES?

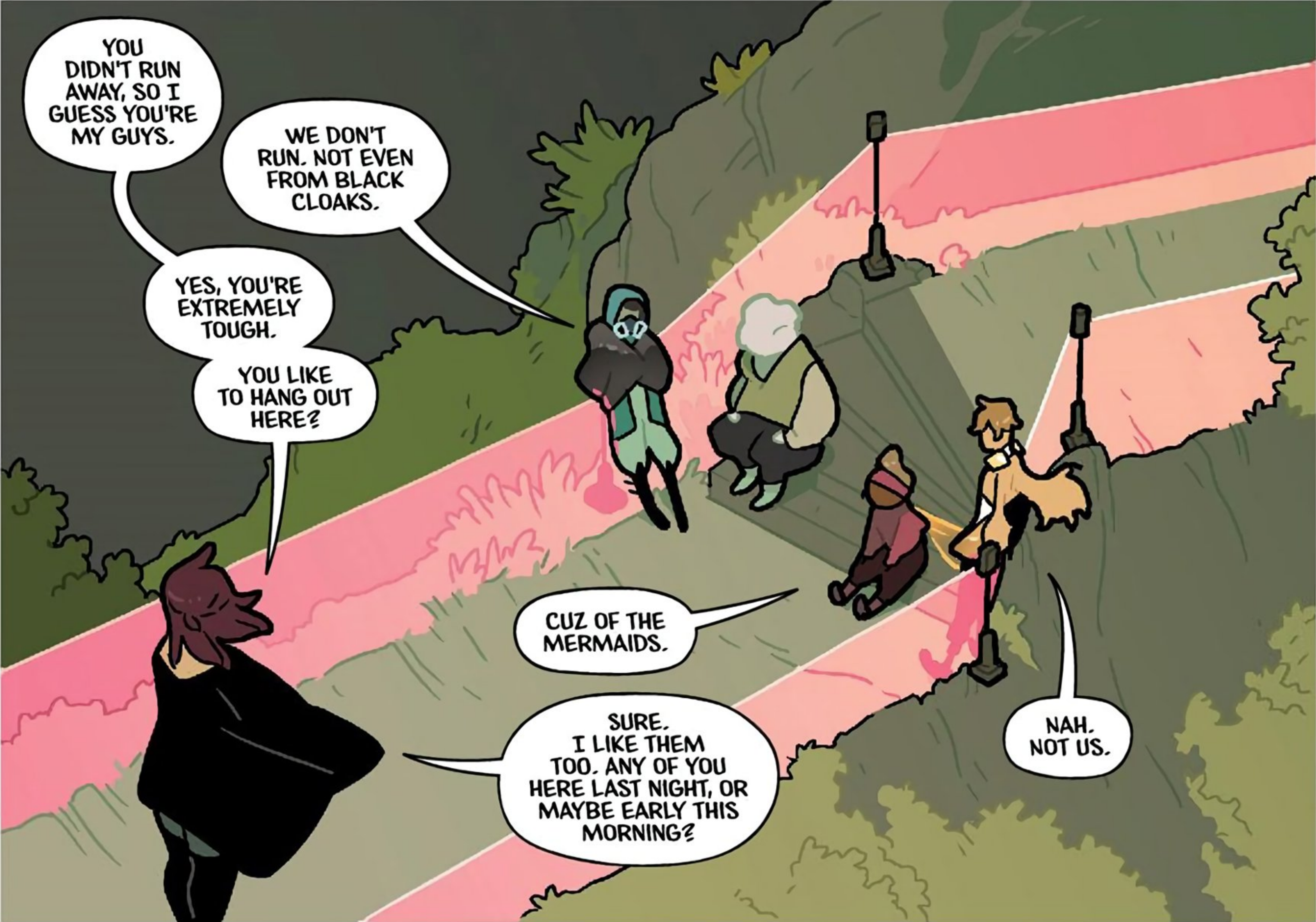
THEY FILL
IT...PATCH IT ALL THE
TIME, BUT SOMETIMES
THERE'S A GAP. PEOPLE
STILL GET THROUGH, I
GUESS? THEY MUST,
RIGHT?

MMMHHM.

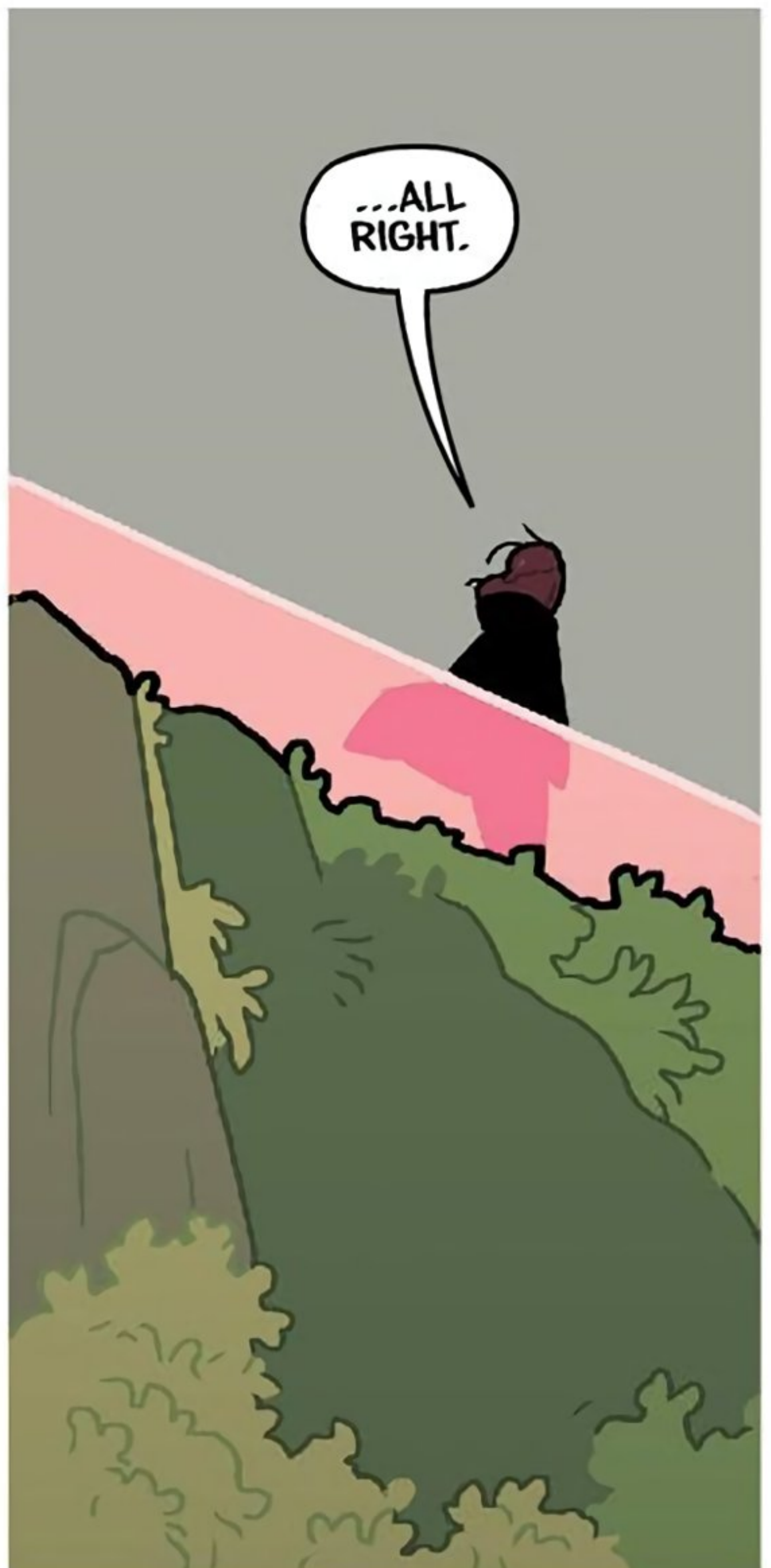
THIS POINT:
EAD WEAR
REQUIRED
BY LAW.

DANGER!
MERMAID
AREA!







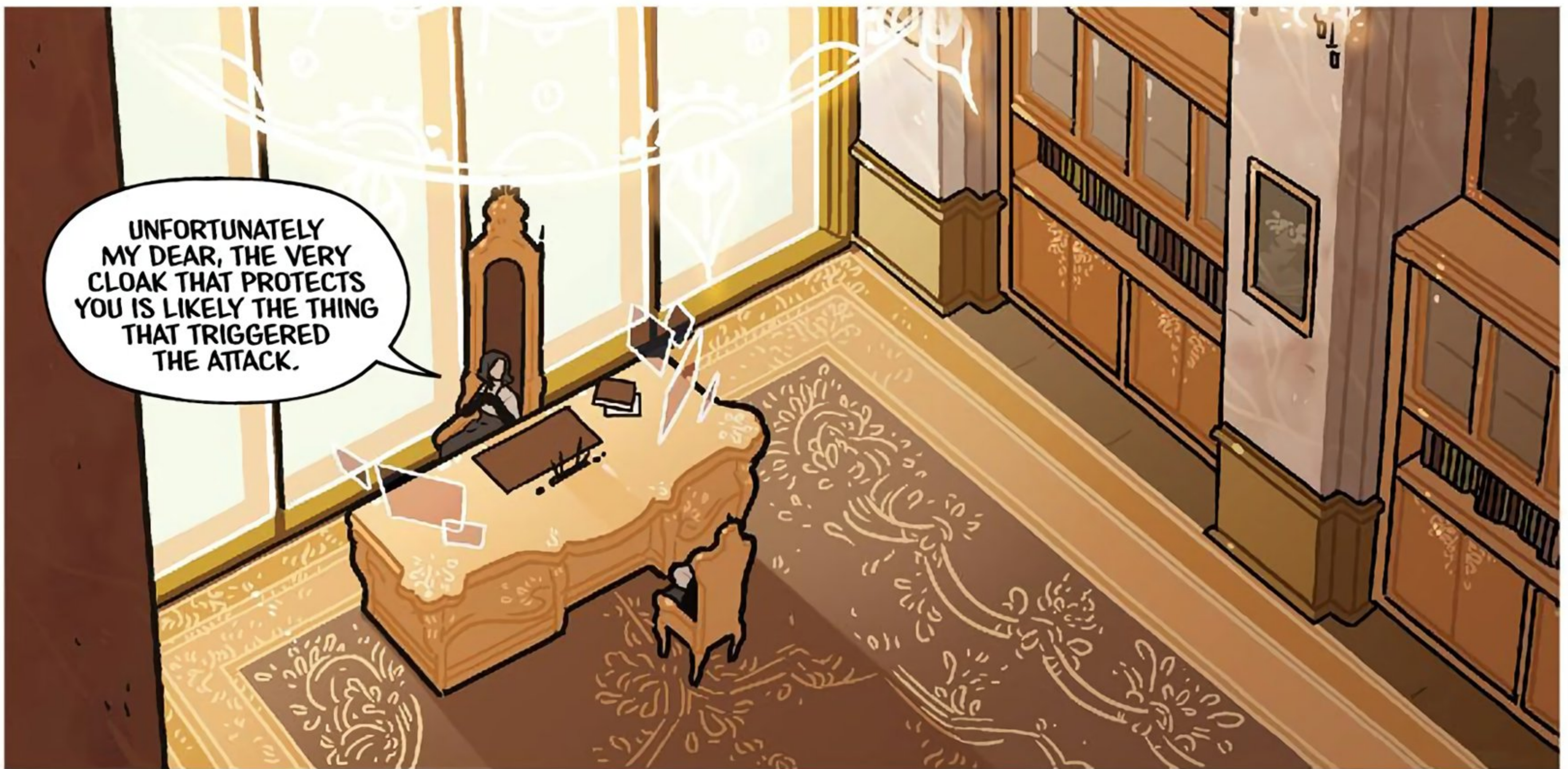
















I'M SORRY, YOUR MAJESTY. I HAVE NO ANSWERS FOR YOU AT THIS TIME.



THEN WHY ARE YOU HERE?



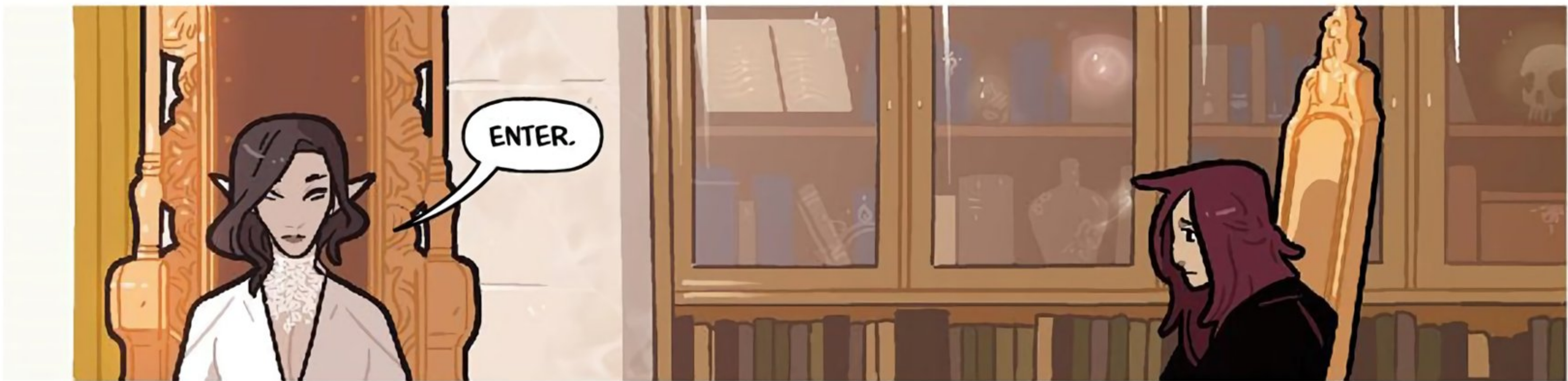
THOUGH I KNEW IT WAS UNLIKELY I COULD GET TO YOU FIRST, I WANTED TO BE THE ONE TO TELL YOU. I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO FIND OUT FROM...A STRANGER.

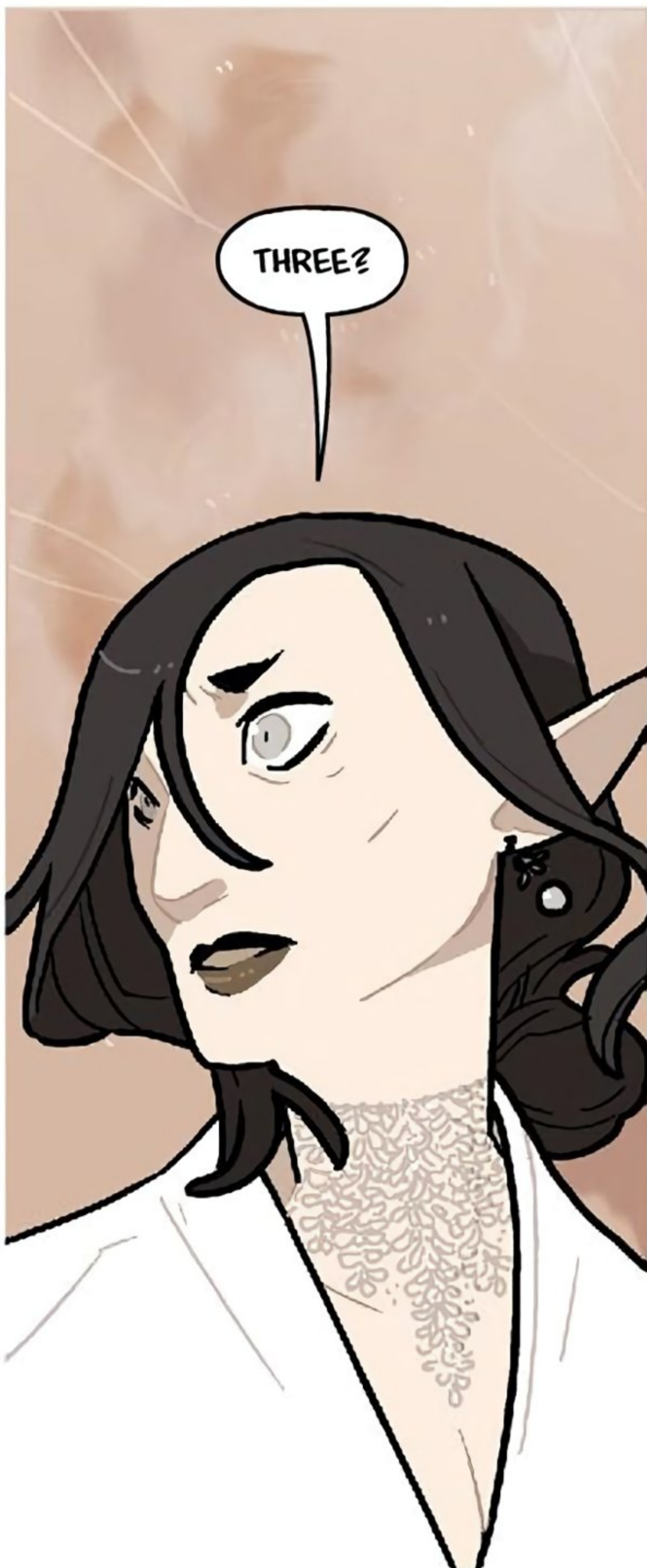
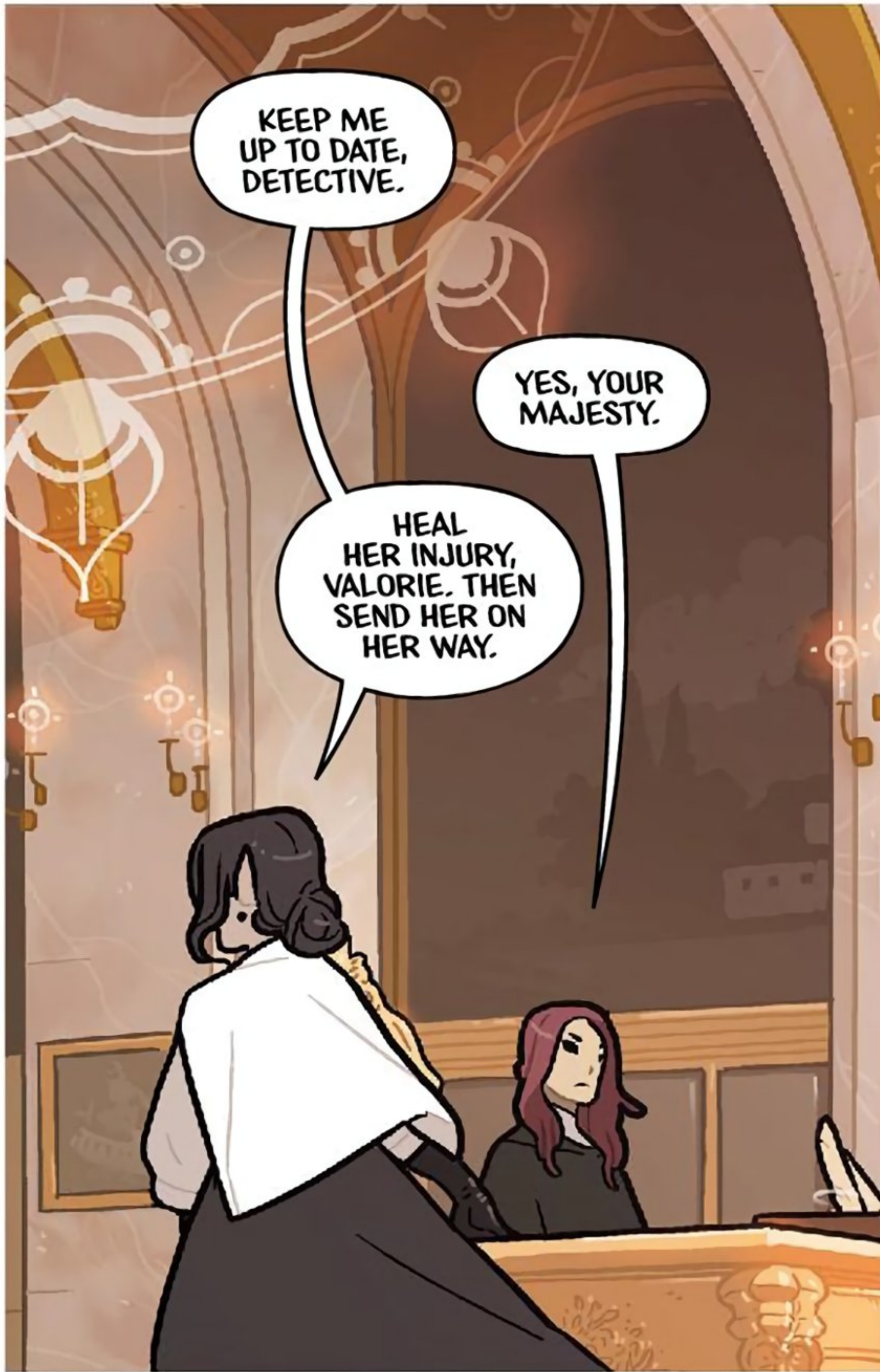


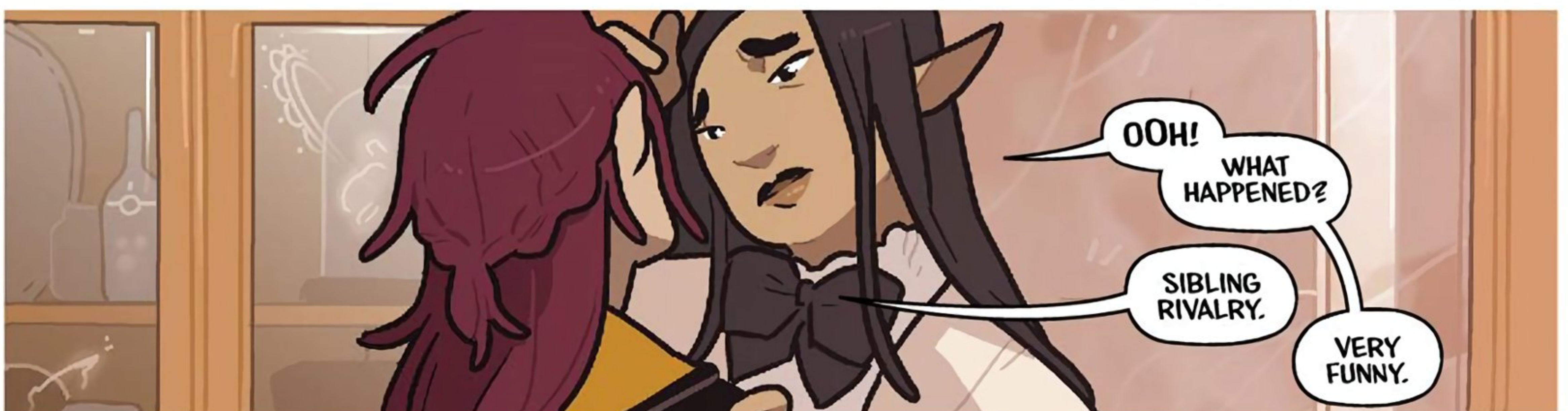
AND YOU ARE **NOT** A STRANGER?

CHILD, I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS.

WITH RESPECT, MY QUEEN, THAT'S NOT BY **MY** CHOICE.



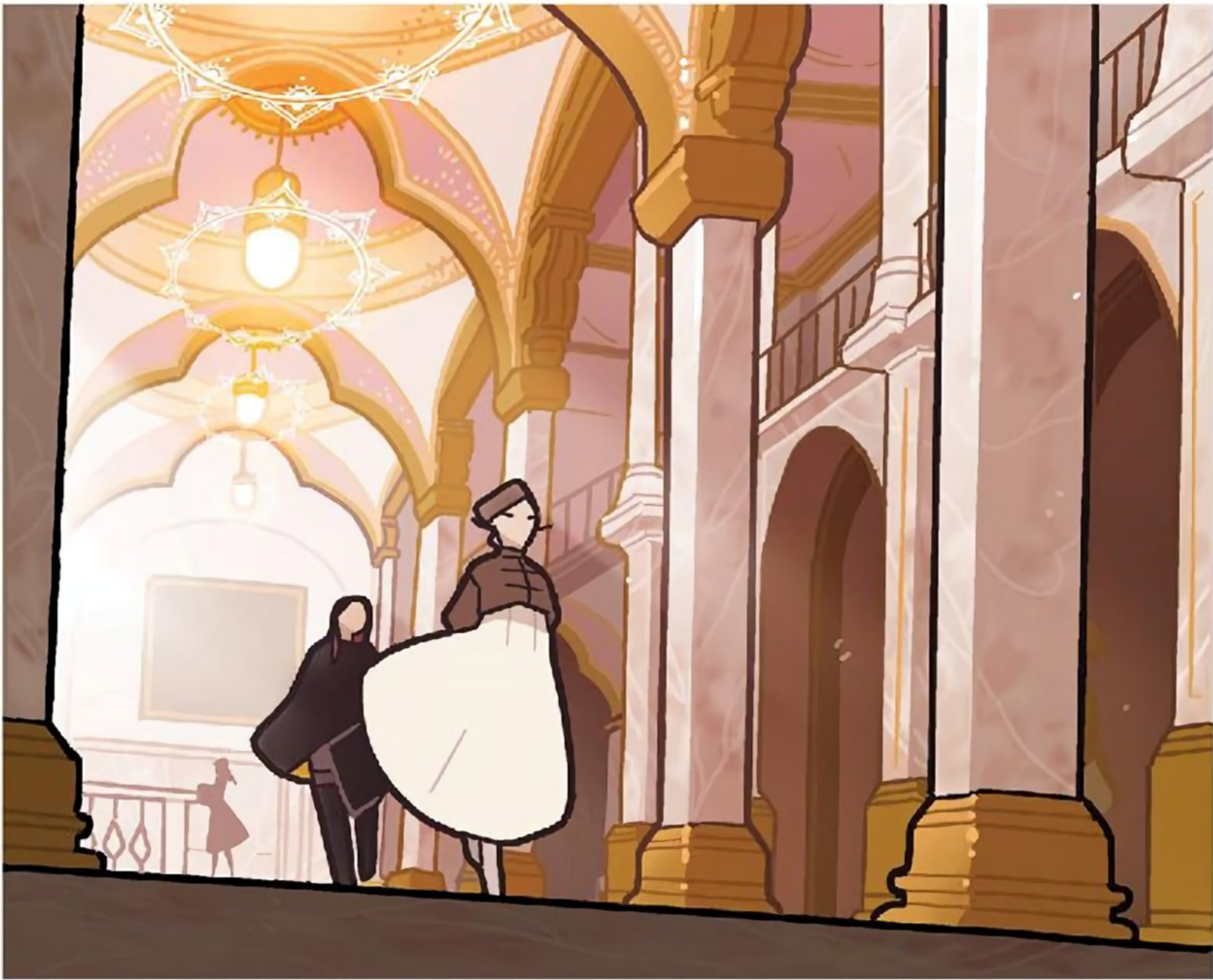




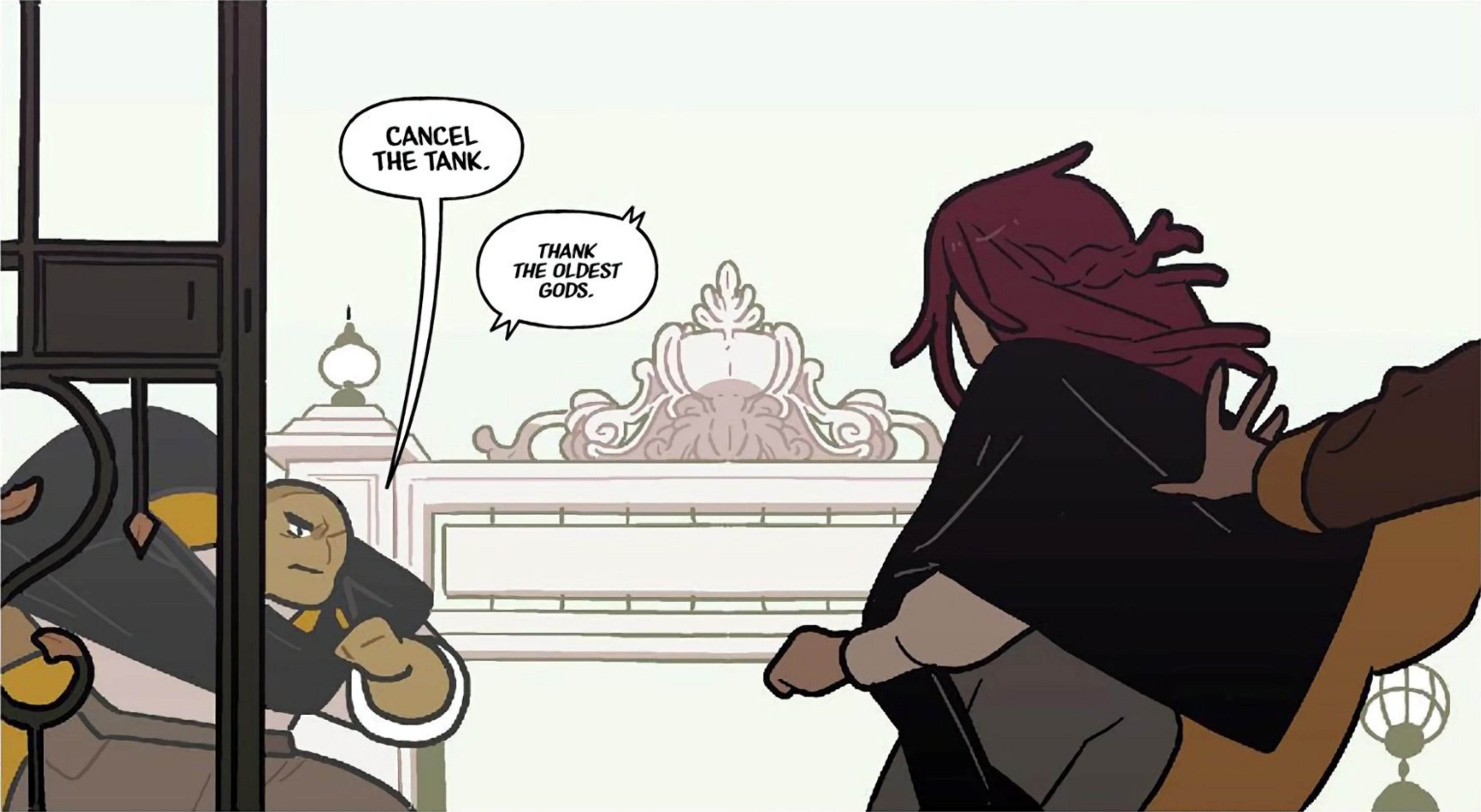
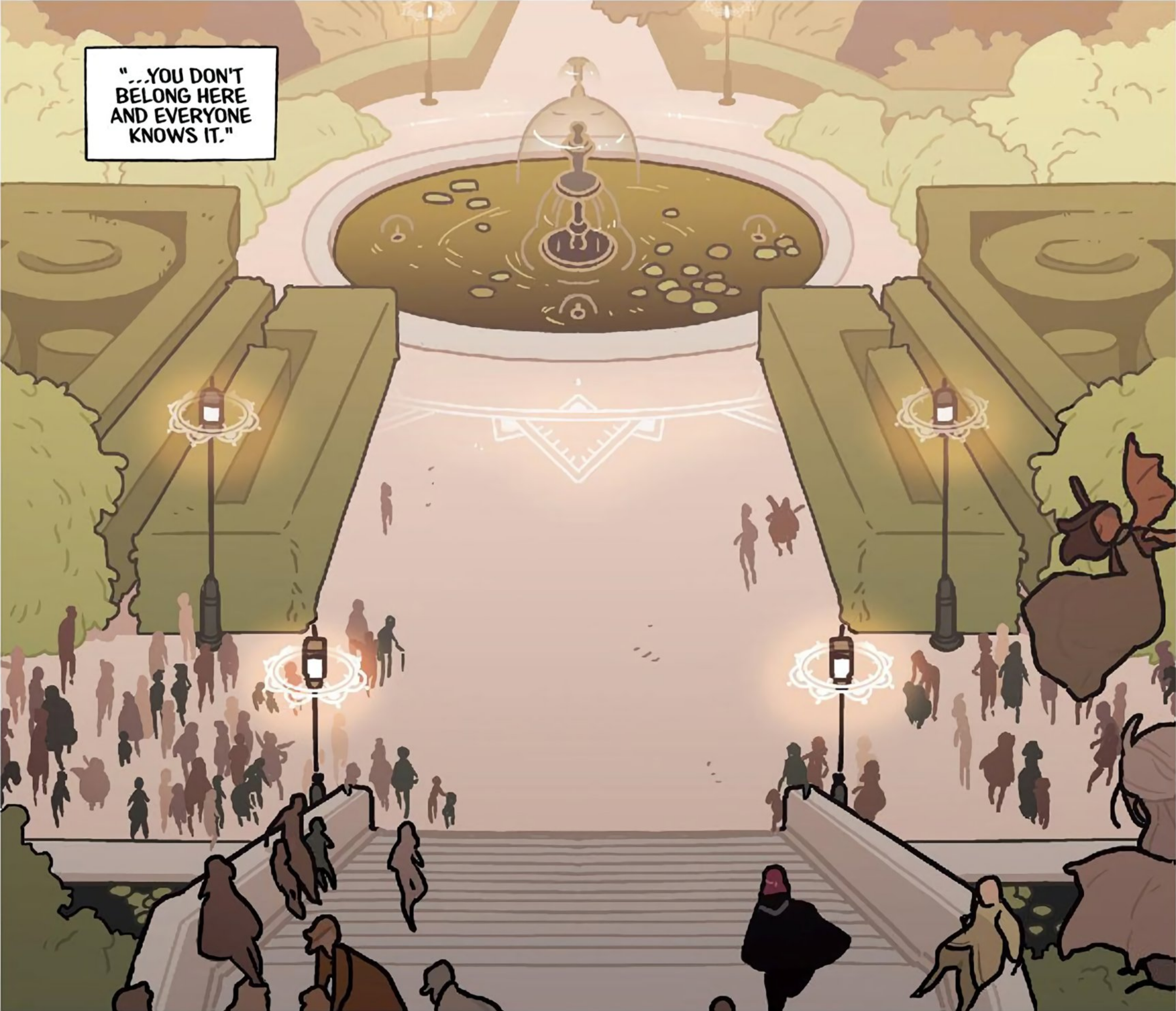




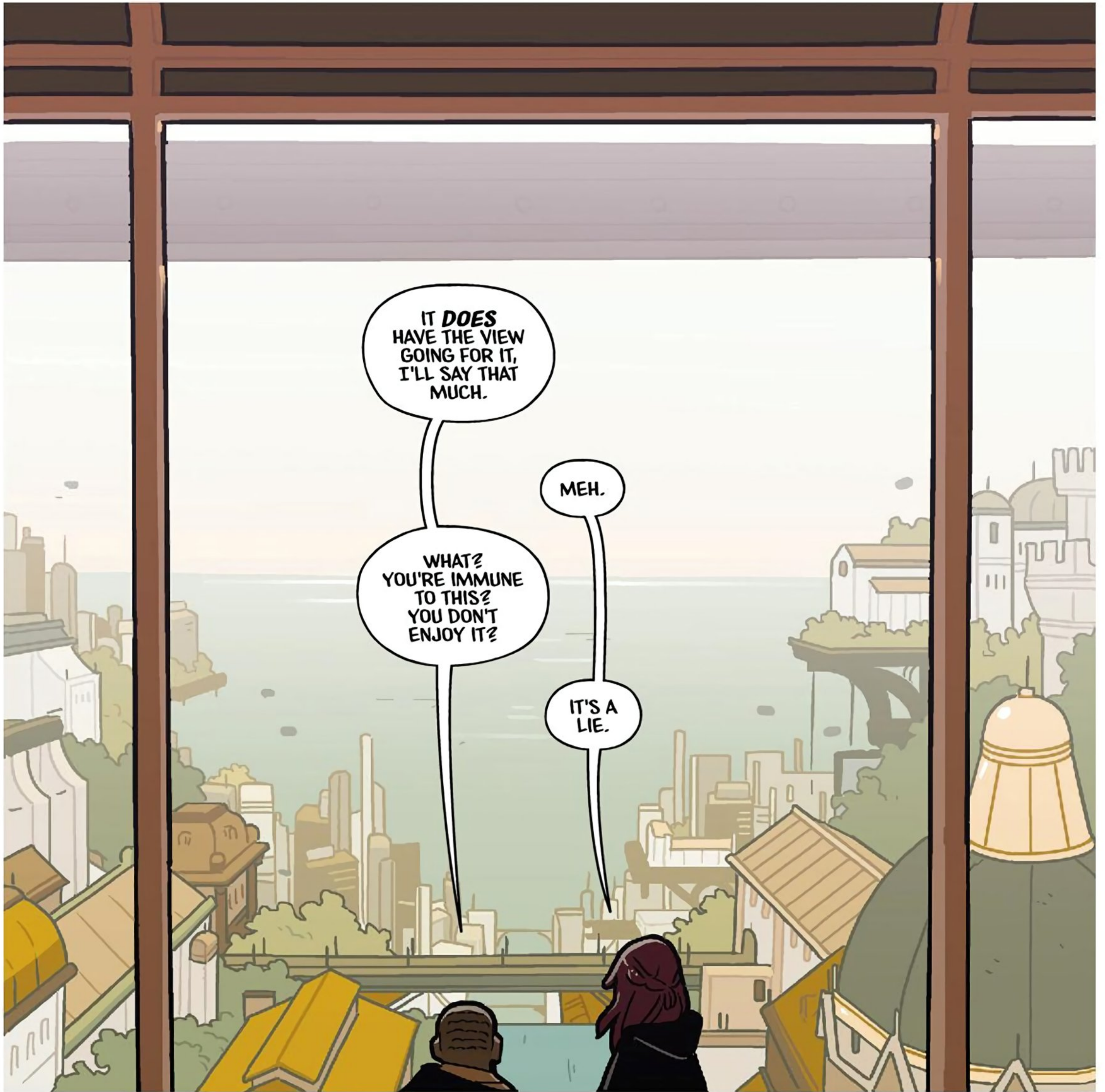










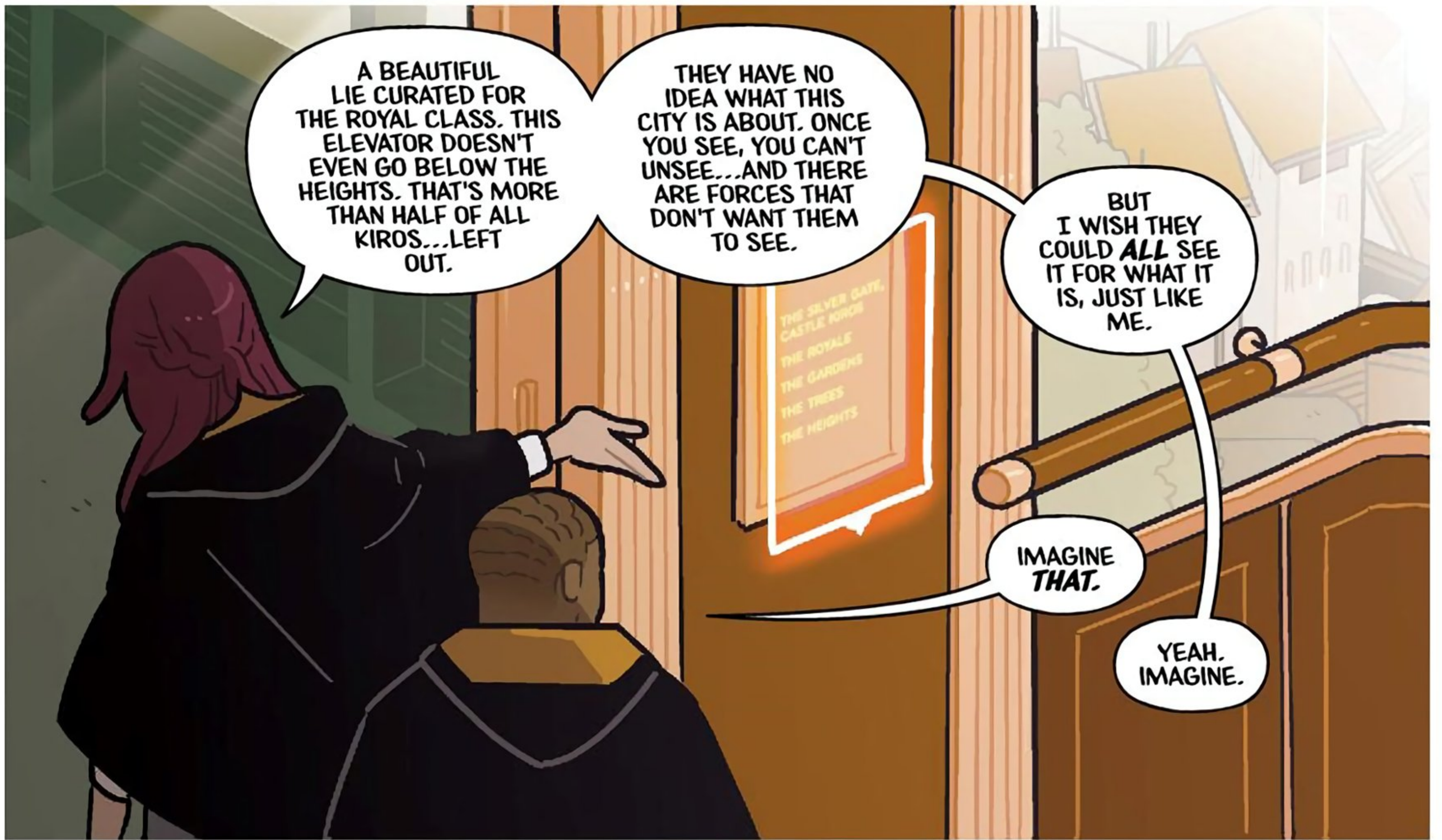


IT **DOES**
HAVE THE VIEW
GOING FOR IT,
I'LL SAY THAT
MUCH.

MEH.

WHAT?
YOU'RE IMMUNE
TO THIS?
YOU DON'T
ENJOY IT?

IT'S A
LIE.



A BEAUTIFUL
LIE CURATED FOR
THE ROYAL CLASS. THIS
ELEVATOR DOESN'T
EVEN GO BELOW THE
HEIGHTS. THAT'S MORE
THAN HALF OF ALL
KIROS...LEFT
OUT.

THEY HAVE NO
IDEA WHAT THIS
CITY IS ABOUT. ONCE
YOU SEE, YOU CAN'T
UNSEE...AND THERE
ARE FORCES THAT
DON'T WANT THEM
TO SEE.

BUT
I WISH THEY
COULD **ALL** SEE
IT FOR WHAT IT
IS, JUST LIKE
ME.

IMAGINE
THAT.

YEAH.
IMAGINE.



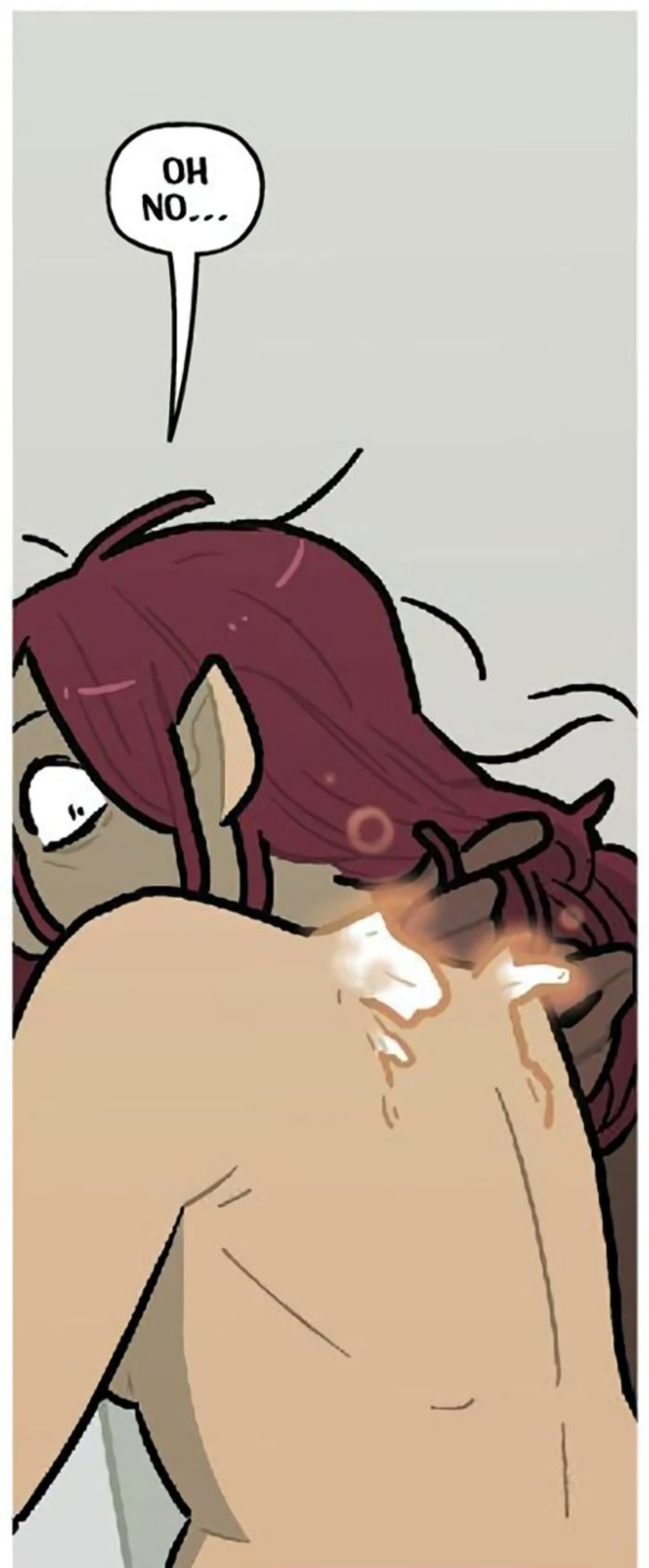
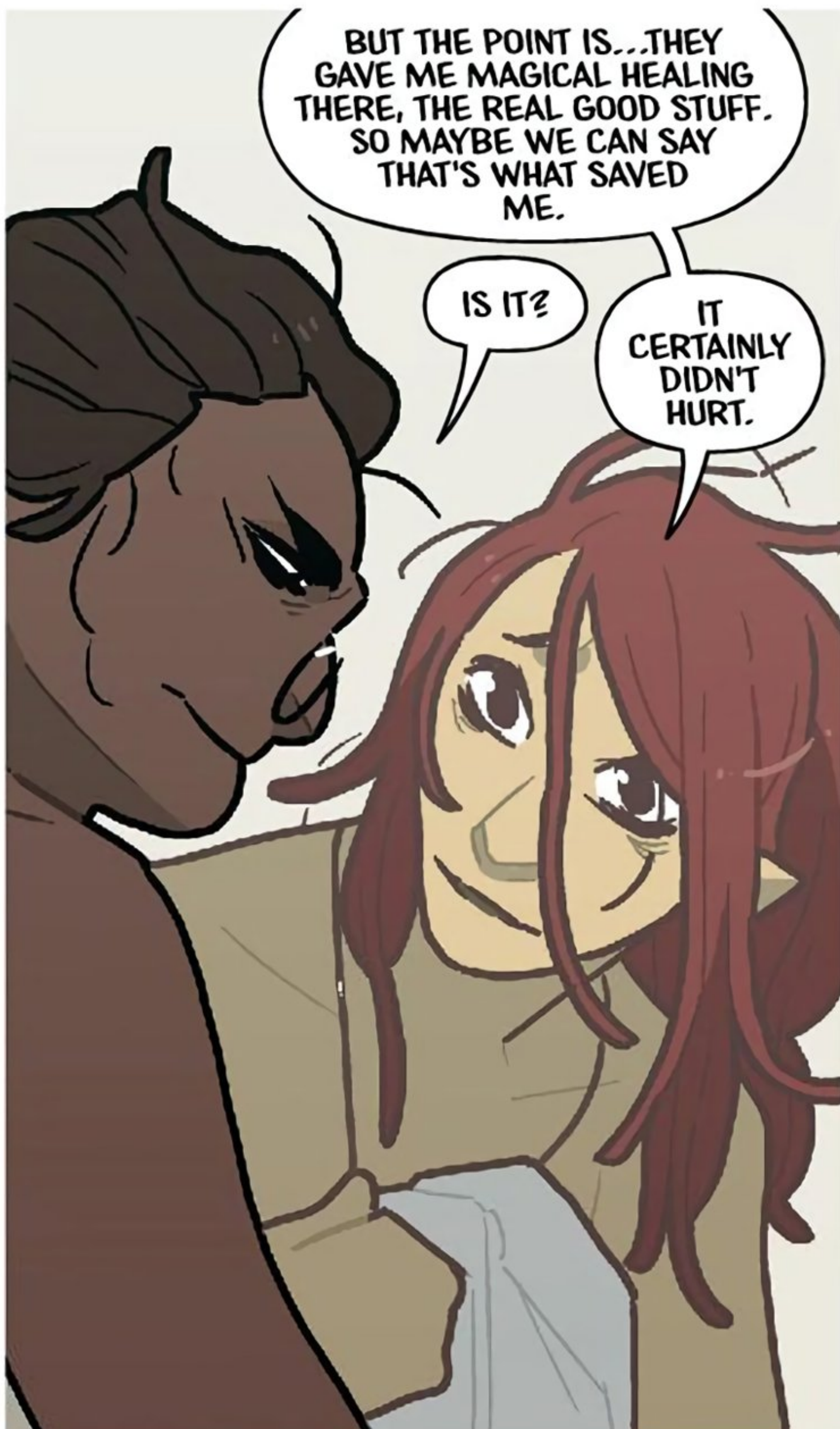














DOES IT HURT?

NO. ITCHES A LITTLE MAYBE.

ARE THEY... ARE THEY GROWING?

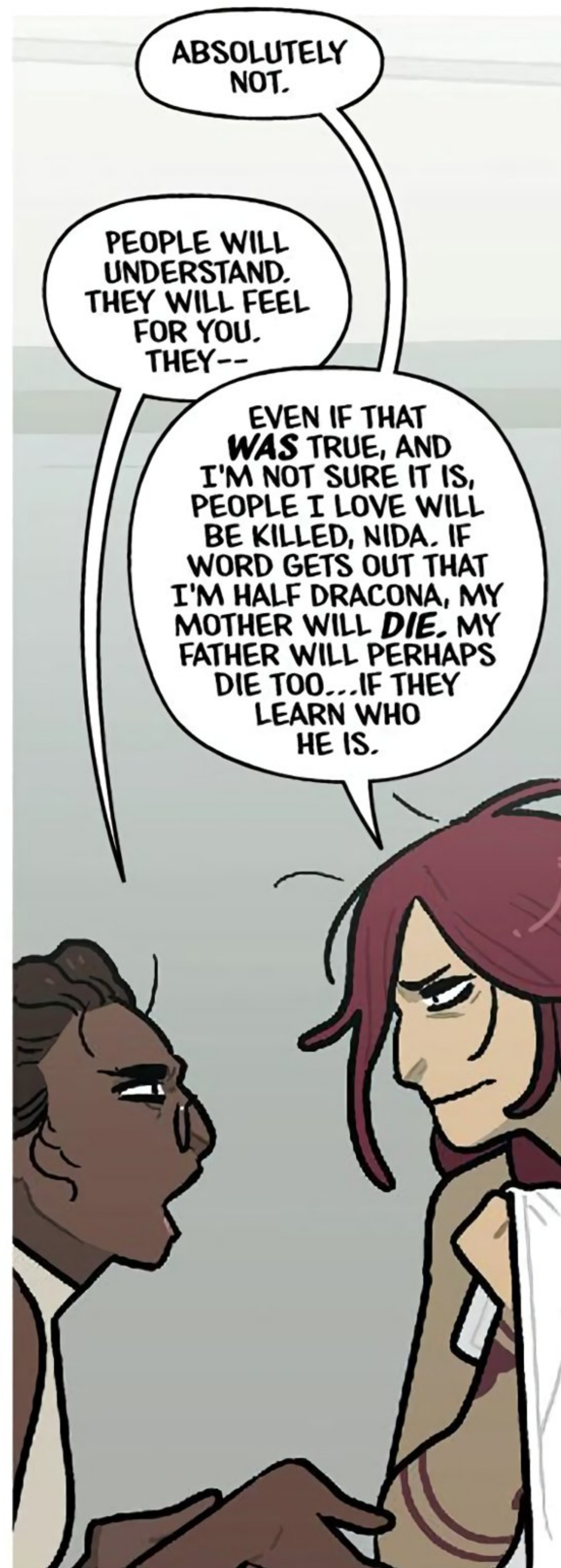
I DON'T THINK SO.



I THINK WE SHOULD TELL THE TRUTH. ALL OF IT.

NO.

PHAEDRA--



ABSOLUTELY NOT.

PEOPLE WILL UNDERSTAND. THEY WILL FEEL FOR YOU. THEY--

EVEN IF THAT **WAS** TRUE, AND I'M NOT SURE IT IS, PEOPLE I LOVE WILL BE KILLED, NIDA. IF WORD GETS OUT THAT I'M HALF DRACONA, MY MOTHER WILL **DIE**. MY FATHER WILL PERHAPS DIE TOO...IF THEY LEARN WHO HE IS.



SO, IT'S ALL RIGHT FOR YOU TO SUFFER INSTEAD? TO LIVE YOUR LIFE IN EXILE? TO FEAR HONOR KILLINGS AND RETRIBUTION AT ANY MOMENT?



I WOULD NOT RISK THEIR LIVES FOR ANYTHING IN ALL OF KIROS, NIDA.

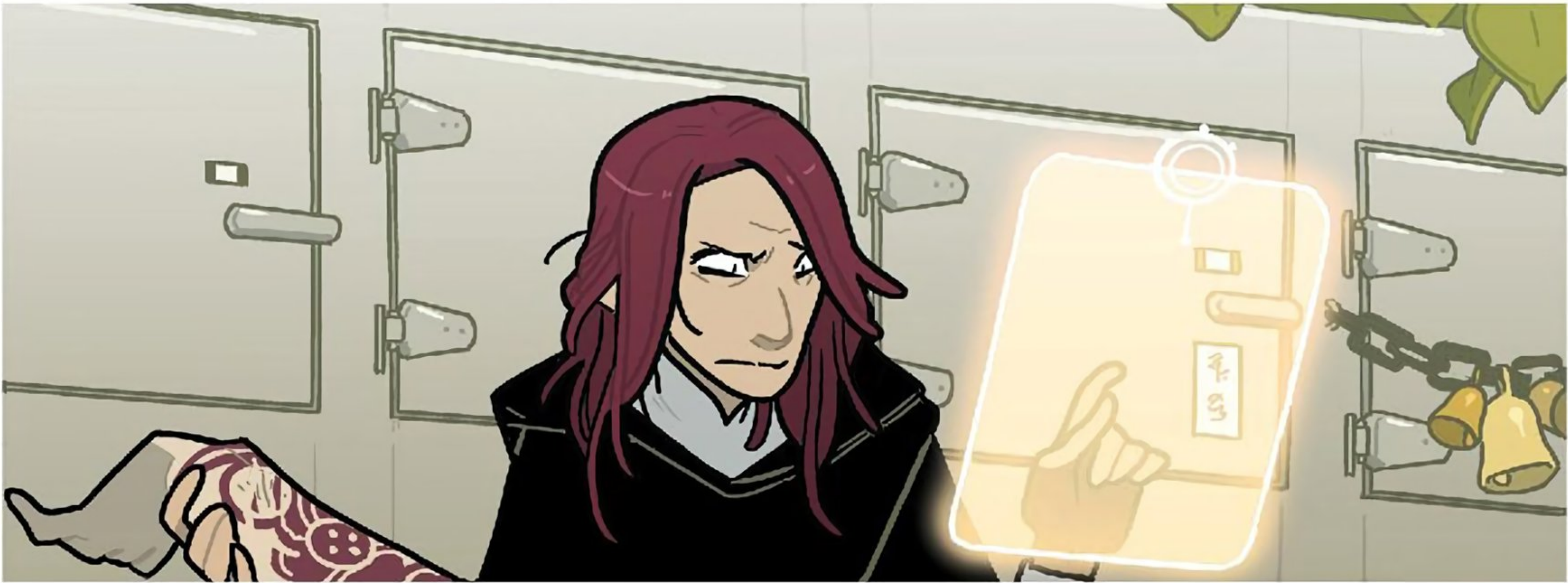
BESIDES, I LIKE MY LIFE. I DIDN'T WANT TO COME TO IT THIS WAY, BUT BEING A BLACK CLOAK IS WHAT I WAS BORN TO DO, IT'S A LIFE I **CHOSE**. JUST LIKE I CHOSE YOU.

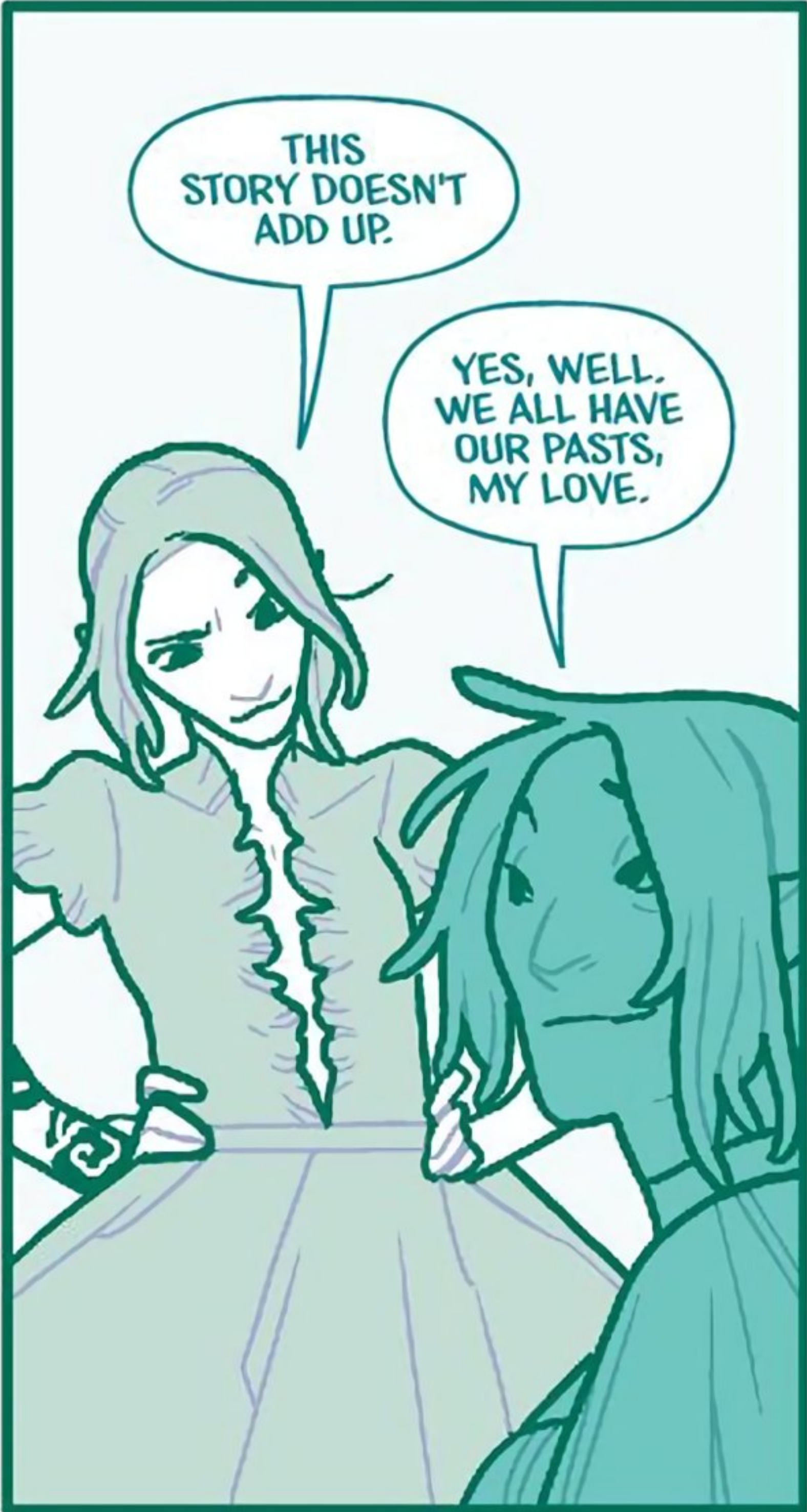
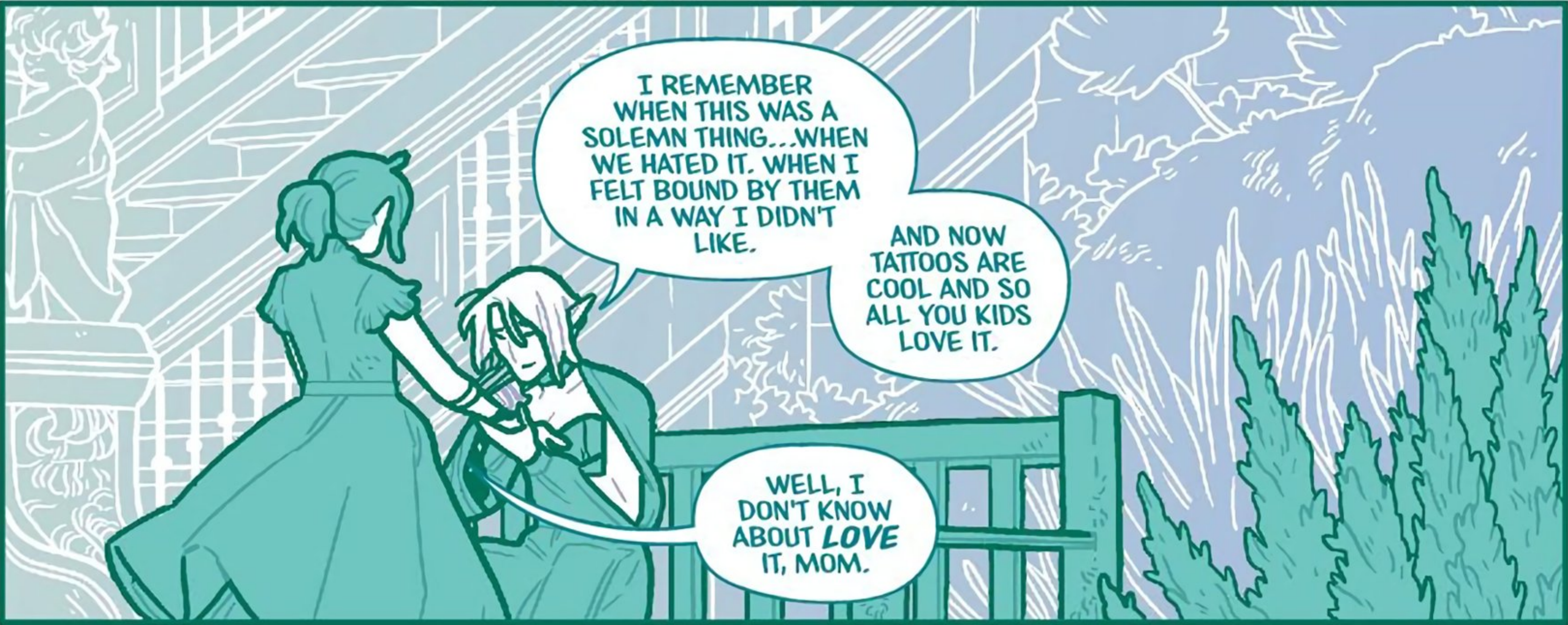


HMMMPH. YOU SHOULD GET DRESSED. I'M SURE YOU'LL WANT TO JOIN PAX IN THE INTERROGATION ROOM.











C'MON!



SOMEDAY SOMEONE THAT'S NOT US IS GOING TO FIND THIS PLACE AND IT IS GOING TO BE SUCH A HUGE BUMMER.

YOU'RE SUCH A WORRIER, FREY.



I CAN'T WAIT TO MARRY YOU, PHAE. I FEEL LIKE WE CAN DO GREAT THINGS.

YOU MEAN TO EACH OTHER, OR "FOR THE WORLD"?

WELL, BOTH I GUESS.



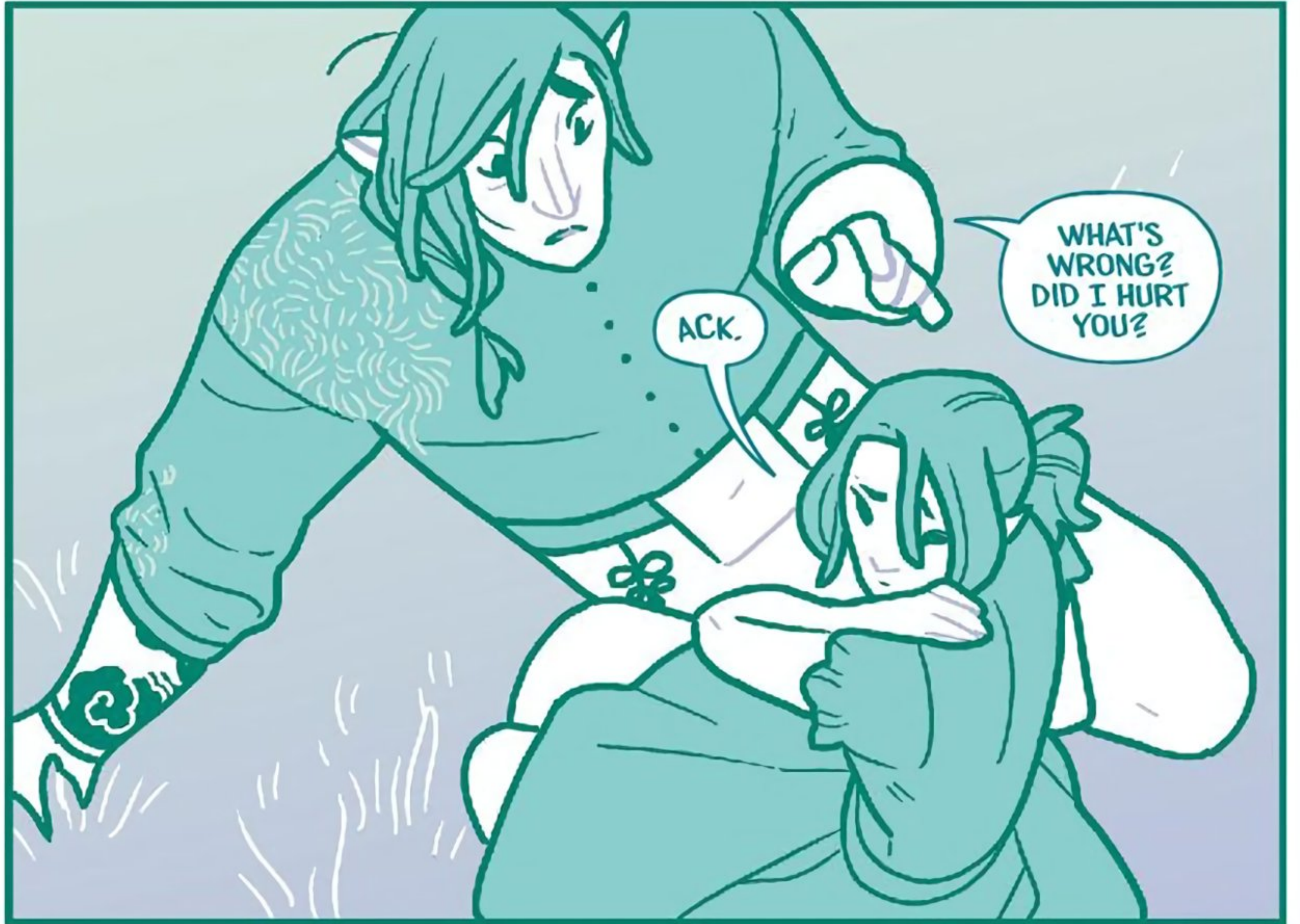
YOU GUESS?

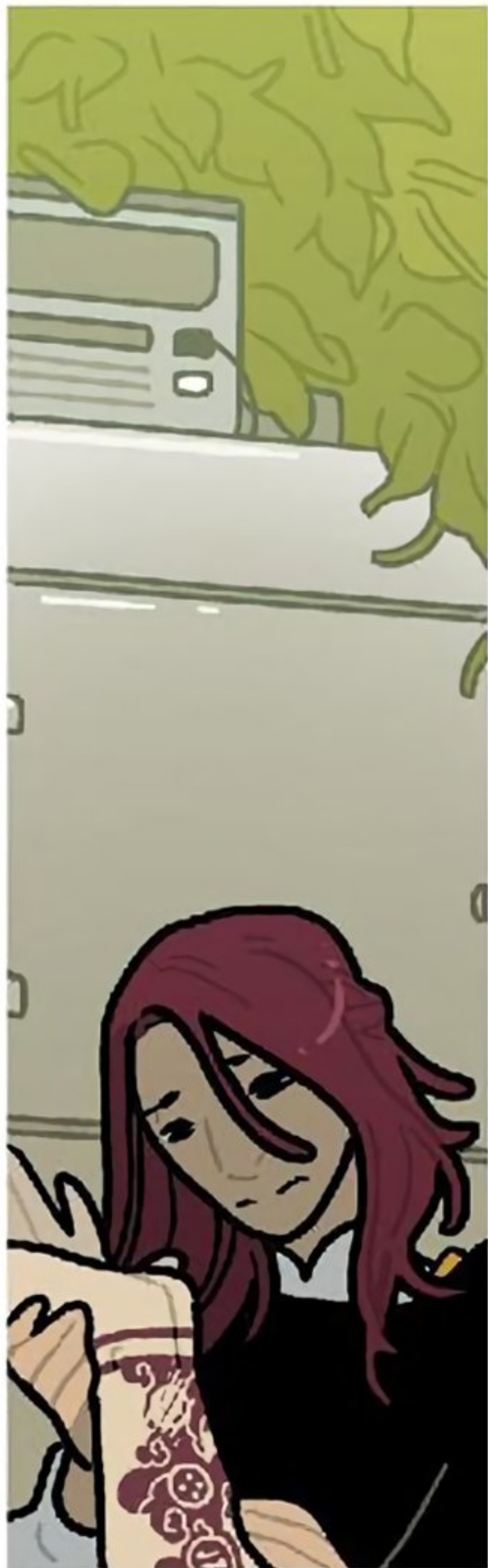
PFFT. DON'T BE FUNNY. YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN. THERE'S SO MUCH ABOUT KIROS I'D LIKE TO FIX. IT FEELS TOO HARD TO DO IT ON MY OWN...TOO MANY PEOPLE TO FIGHT. BUT YOU AND ME TOGETHER? I FEEL LIKE WE CAN DO ANYTHING, TAKE ON ANYONE.

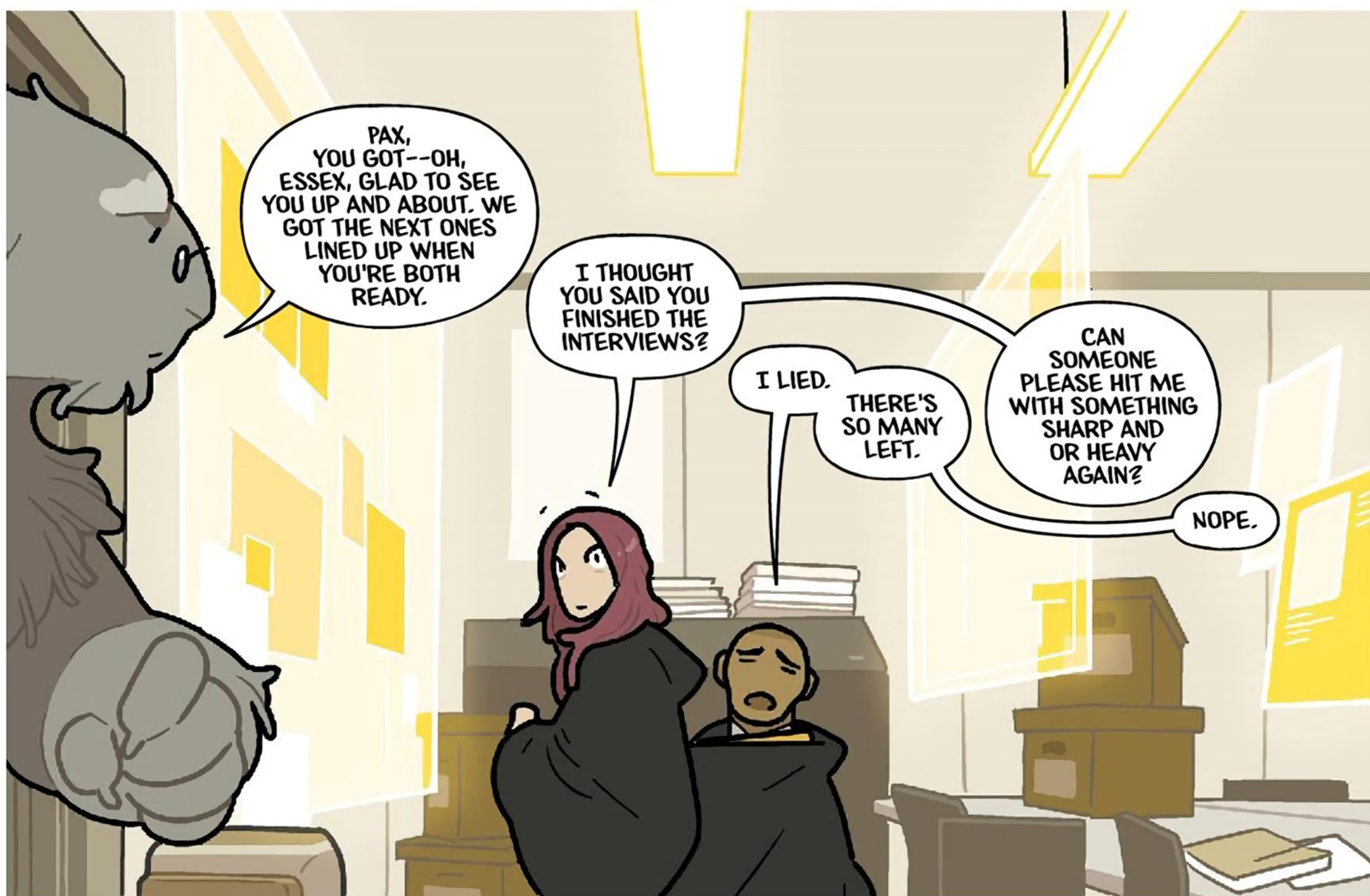
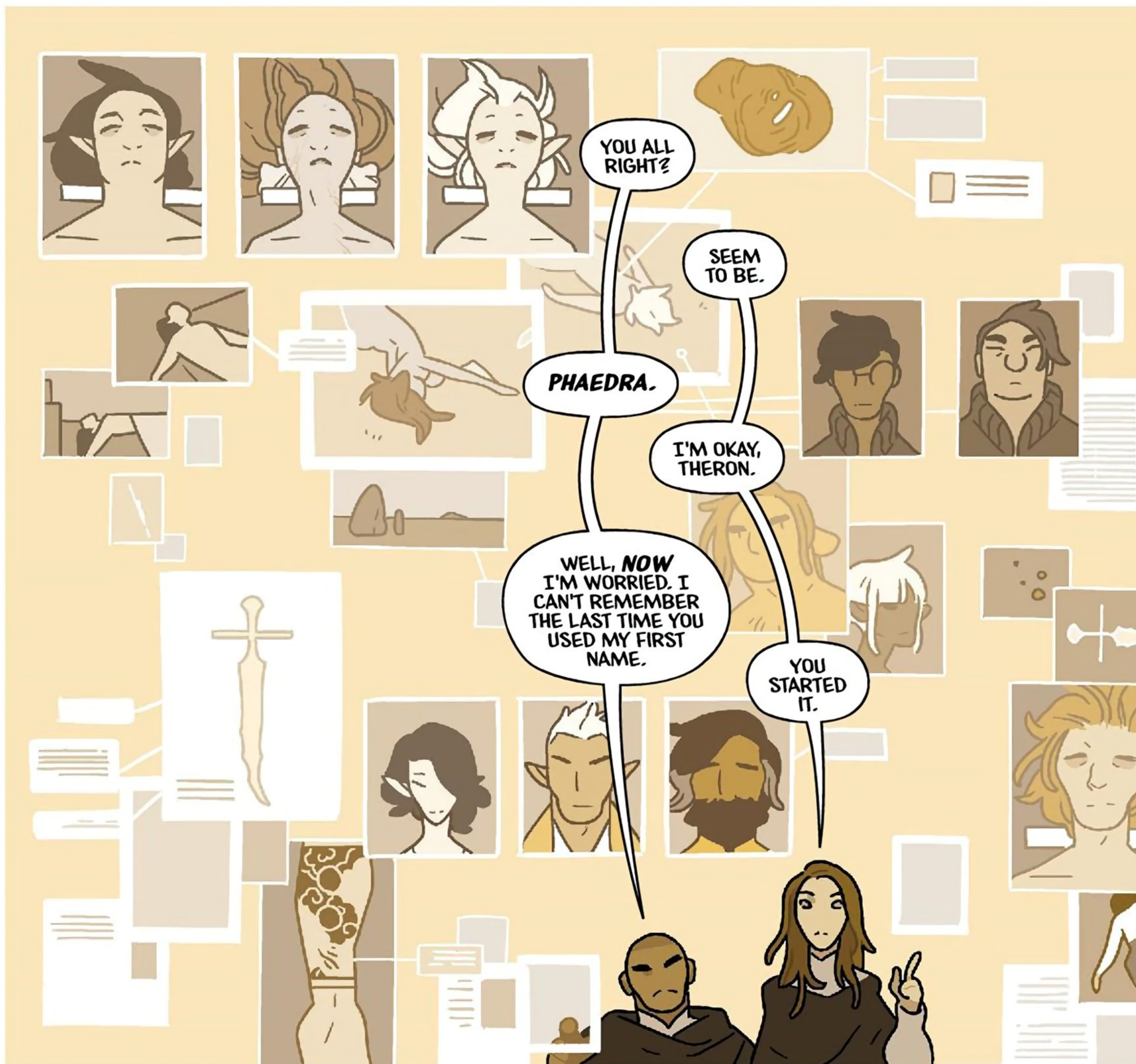


YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, FREYAL III OF SIDRA.















IONA AND I STAYED AFTER JESSUP AND TOMIG LEFT, MOSTLY CUZ WE LIKE THE MAIDS.

JESSUP AND TOMIG JUST LIKE 'EM BECAUSE IT'S LIKE...Y'KNOW, IF YOU CAN BE UP THERE ON THE LOOKOUT WHEN THE WIND IS RIGHT, YOU CAN KINDA HEAR THEM FROM BELOW. AND IT'S LIKE--LIKE A TEST OF WILLS OR WHATEVER TO HEAR THEM AND WALK AWAY, Y'KNOW?



THE--THEY'RE MOST ACTIVE AT DAWN...YOU CAN SEE THEM DO REALLY COOL STUFF... HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THEM, DETECTIVE?

NO, CAN'T SAY THAT I HAVE.

WELL, IT'S REALLY COOL.



WE WERE JUST WATCHING THEM AND THIS FIGURE... IN A LONG, DARK HOODED CLOAK...COMES WALKING ONTO THE BEACH OUT OF NOWHERE. EXCEPT, THEY GOT NO FEET...NO PRINTS IN THE SAND EITHER.



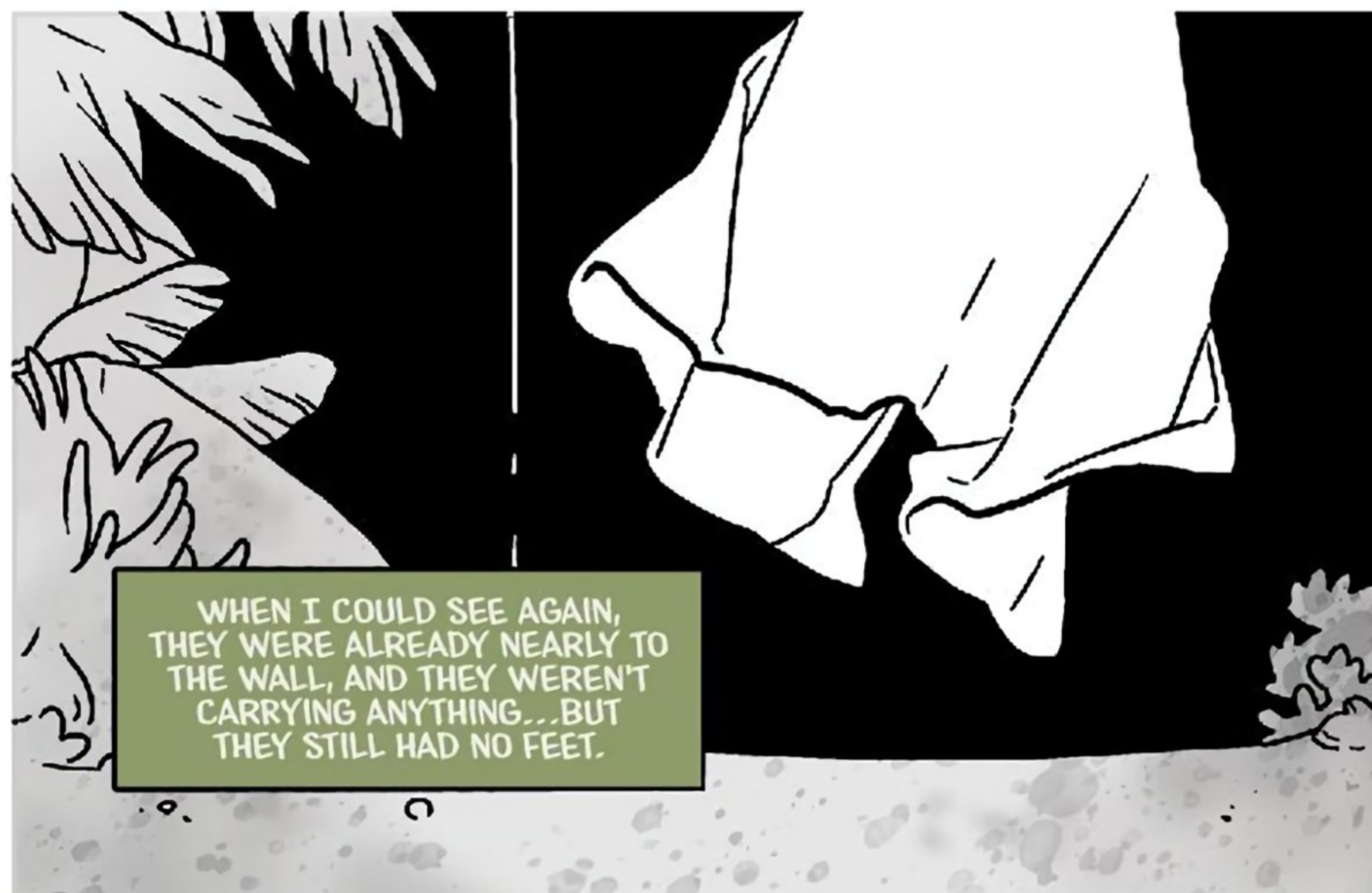
AND THEY'RE CARRYING SOMETHING. I COULDN'T SEE THEIR FACE, OR EVEN THEIR BODY REALLY.

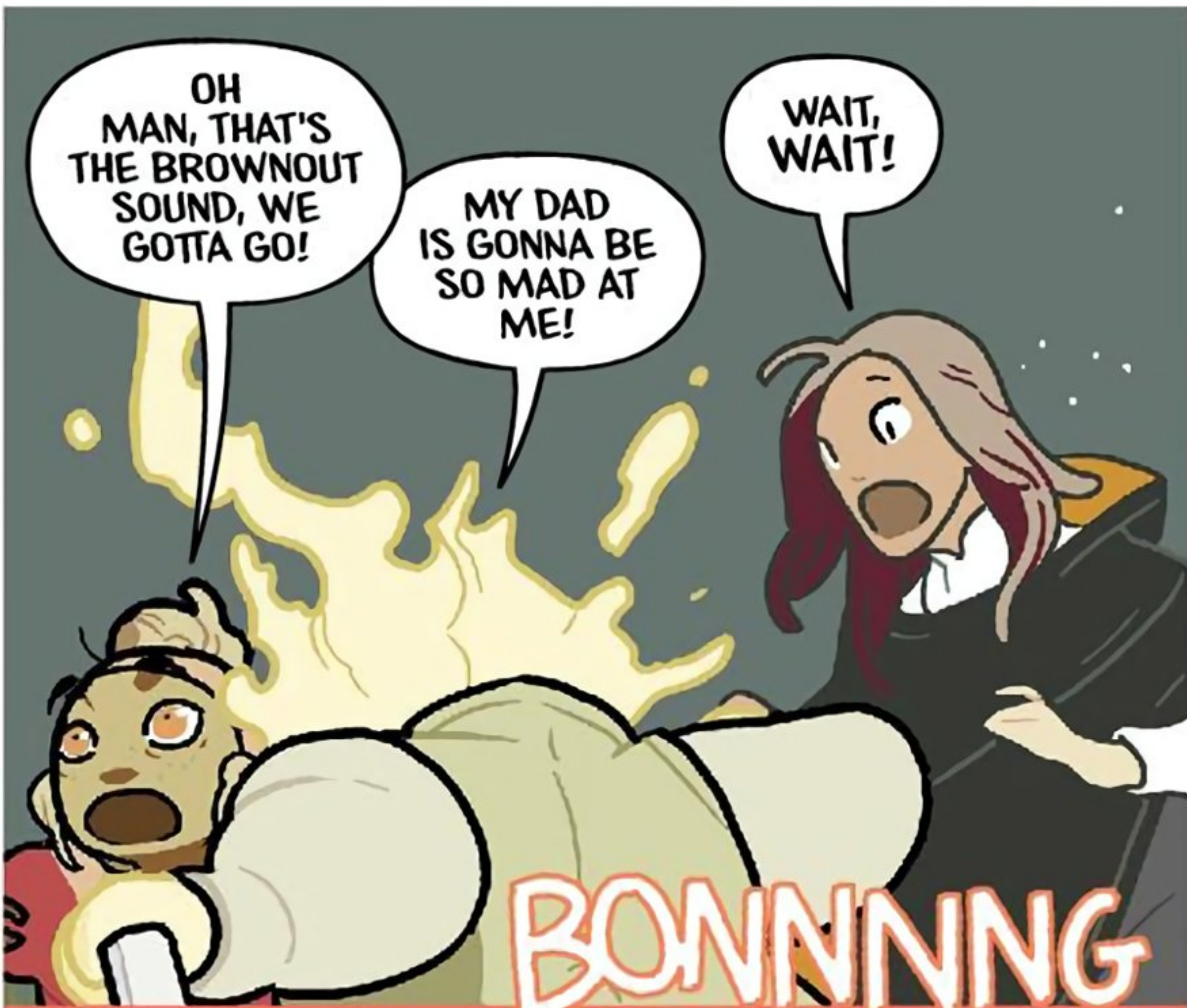


AND THEN THERE WAS THIS **FLASH** OF LIGHT. BLINDED ME FOR A MINUTE.



WHEN I COULD SEE AGAIN, THEY WERE ALREADY NEARLY TO THE WALL, AND THEY WEREN'T CARRYING ANYTHING...BUT THEY STILL HAD NO FEET.





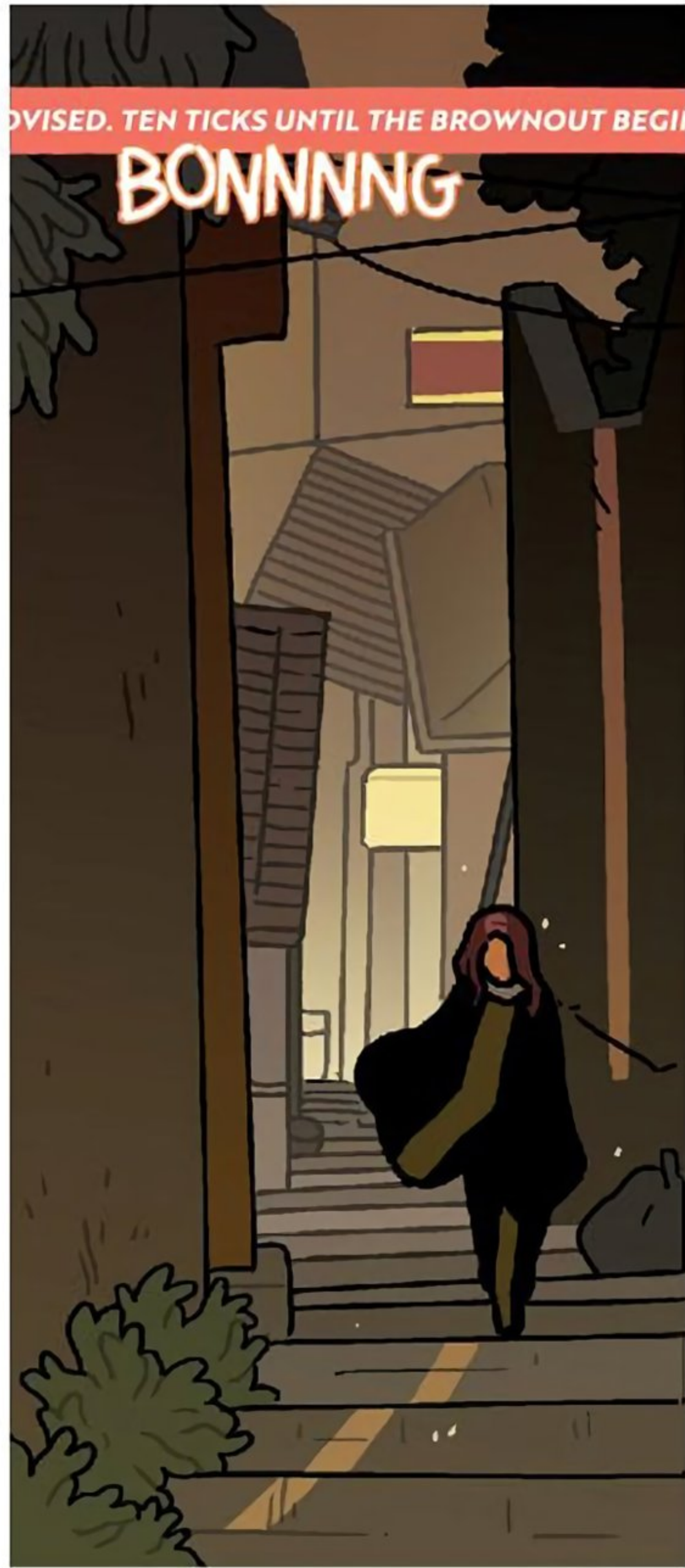
PLEASE BE ADVISED. TEN TICKS UNTIL THE BROWNOUT BEGINS • PLEASE BE ADVISED. TEN TICKS UNTIL THE BROWNOUT BEGINS • PLEASE BE ADVISED. TEN TICKS UNTIL THE BROWNOUT BEGINS



PLEASE BE ADVISED. TEN TICKS UNTIL THE BROWNOUT BEGINS • PLEASE BE ADVISED. TEN TICKS UNTIL THE BROWNOUT BEGINS • ADVISED. TEN TICKS UNTIL THE BROWNOUT BEGINS



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I'D SAY "KNOW" IS AN EXAGGERATION, BUT "SUSPECTS" IS FAIR ENOUGH.



SHE IS A **BLACK CLOAK** AFTER ALL, PERHAPS SHE'S JUST THAT GOOD.

WE WERE WELL CLOAKED, DETECTIVE... CAN YOU SENSE MAGIC?

NOT USUALLY, NO.



YOU AREN'T GOING TO ASK WHO WE ARE?



I KNOW WHO YOU ARE.



YOU ARE ELEA VERIS.

GALAL III OF VERIS.

AND ALDRIC II OF SOLAS.

ALSO KNOWN AS THE THREE MOST POWERFUL HUMANS IN ALL OF KIROS.

YOU GUYS JUST HERE TO HANG, OR WHAT?

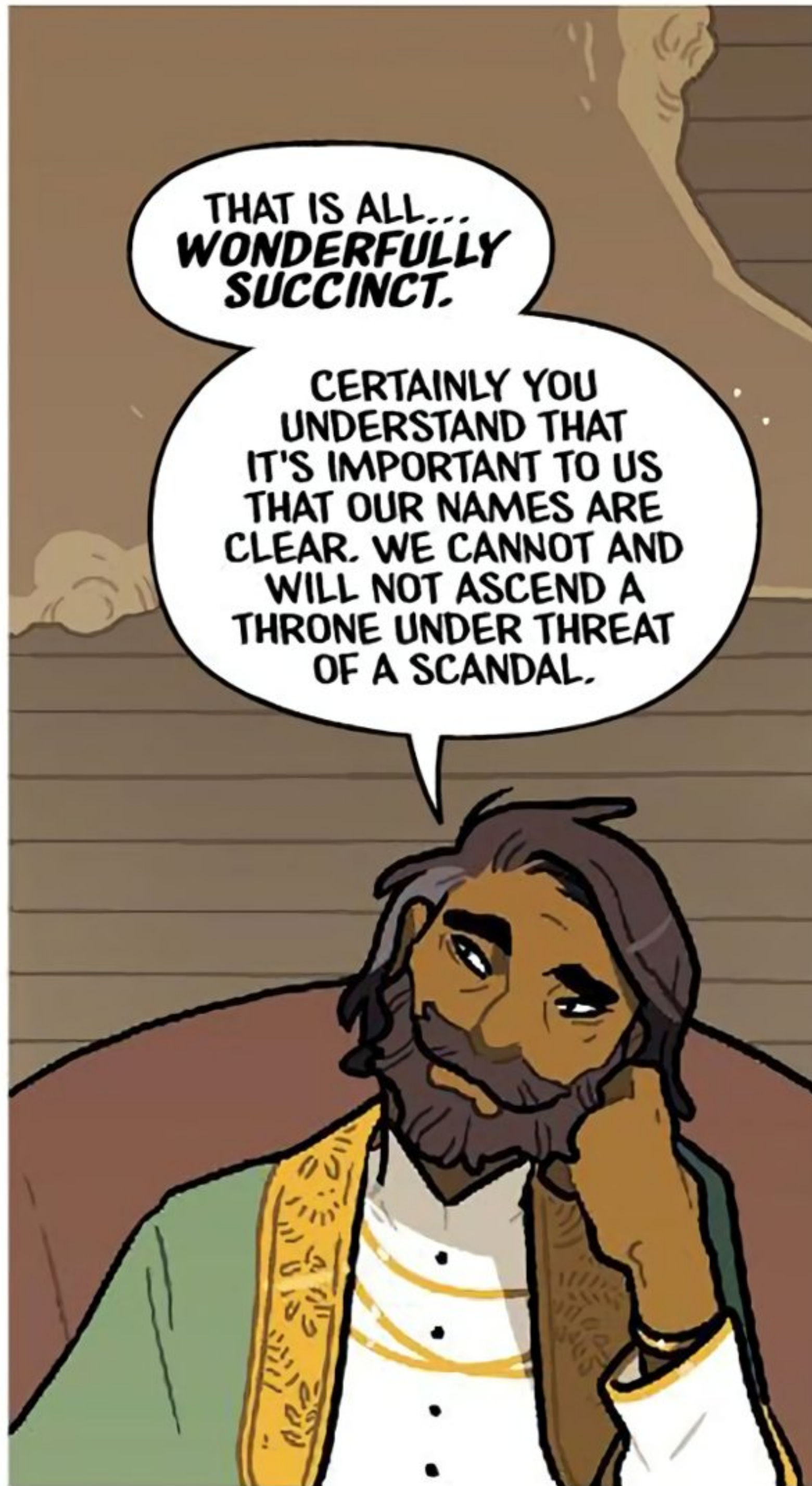


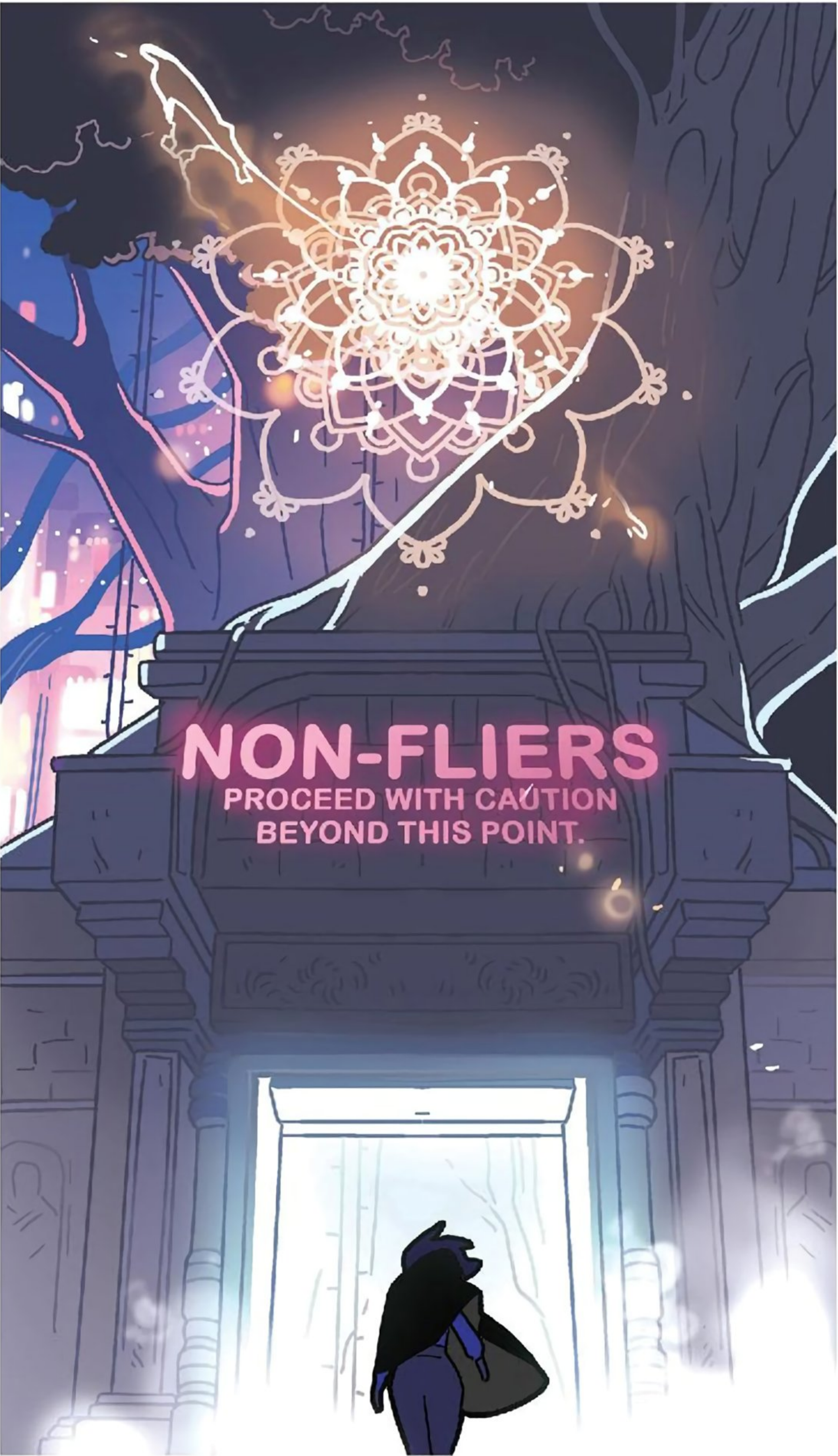
SHE'S FEISTY. I LIKE HER.

BUT STILL MORE FUN.

IN MY EXPERIENCE, FEISTY IS TROUBLE.

DO YOU KNOW **WHY** WE'RE HERE, DETECTIVE?



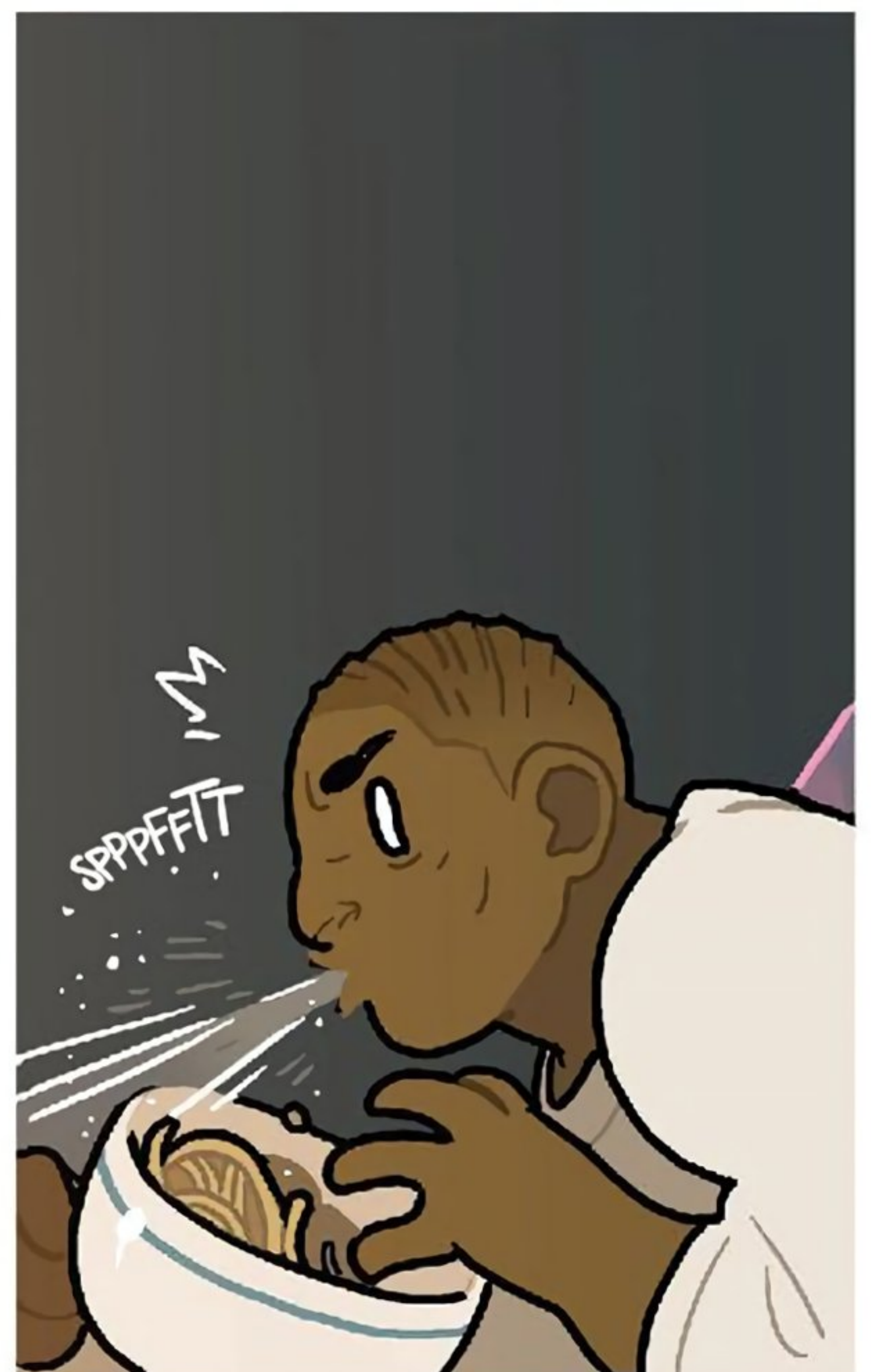


loc. >> 002.03
THE TREES.











YOU'RE SAYING HE MIGHT HAVE LEFT A **FUCKING** NOTE!?!

IT'S UNLIKELY. BUT WHEN I REVIEWED NIDA'S NOTES FROM HER AUTOPSY...SHE SUGGESTED THE SCARRING ON HIS ARM MIGHT HAVE BEEN SELF-INFLICTED.



THE SYMBOL THAT WAS SCRATCHED OUT WAS THE ONE FOR HONOR.

YOU THINK MAYBE HE HAD SOMETHING TO CONFESS.

...MAYBE.



AND IF IT'S GOING TO BE RELEVANT TO THE CASE, YOU SHOULD BE THERE WHEN I LOOK.

I'M GLAD YOU CAN SEE THAT.



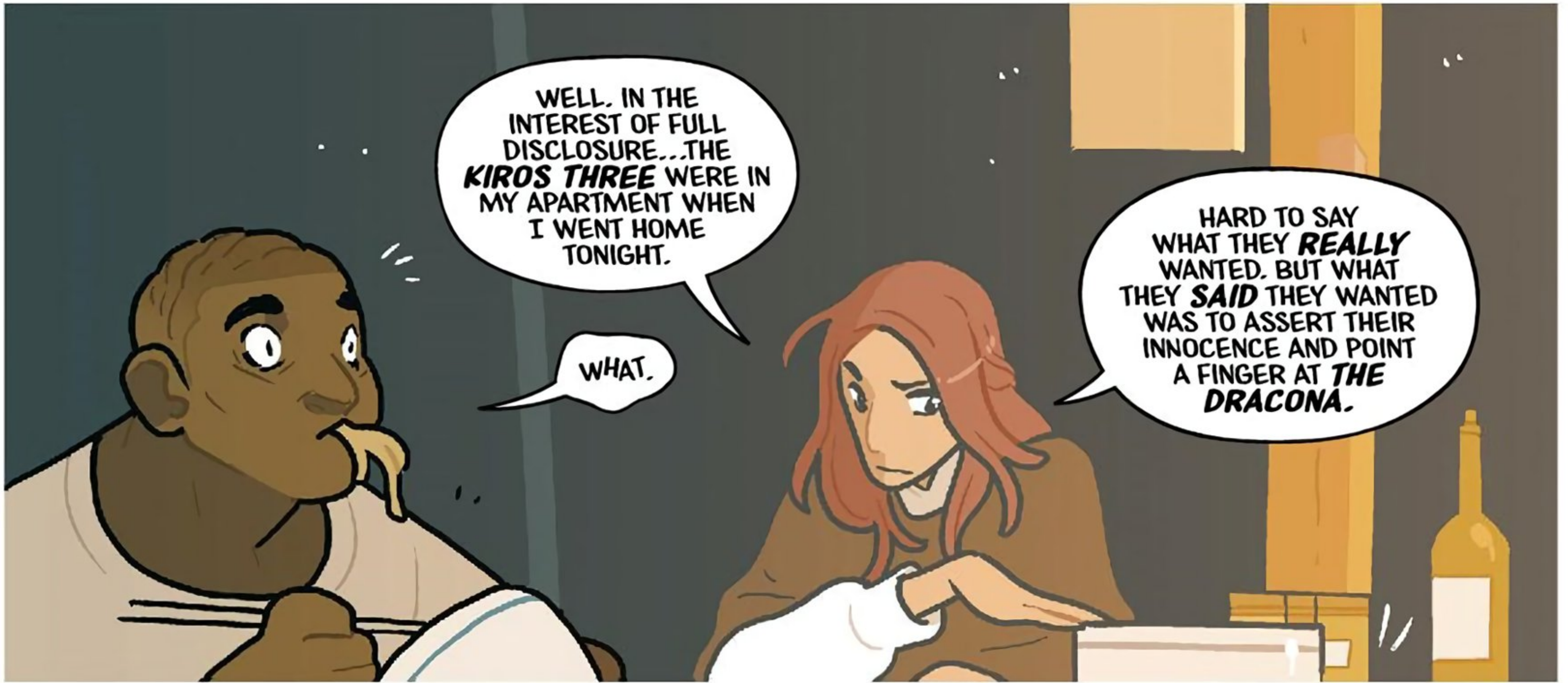
WHAT DOES **THAT** MEAN?

I KNOW THIS CASE IS PERSONAL, ESSEX... BUT YOU GOTTA LET ME IN. I CAN HELP YOU SOLVE THIS, BUT YOU GOTTA STOP PLAYING YOUR CARDS SO CLOSE.

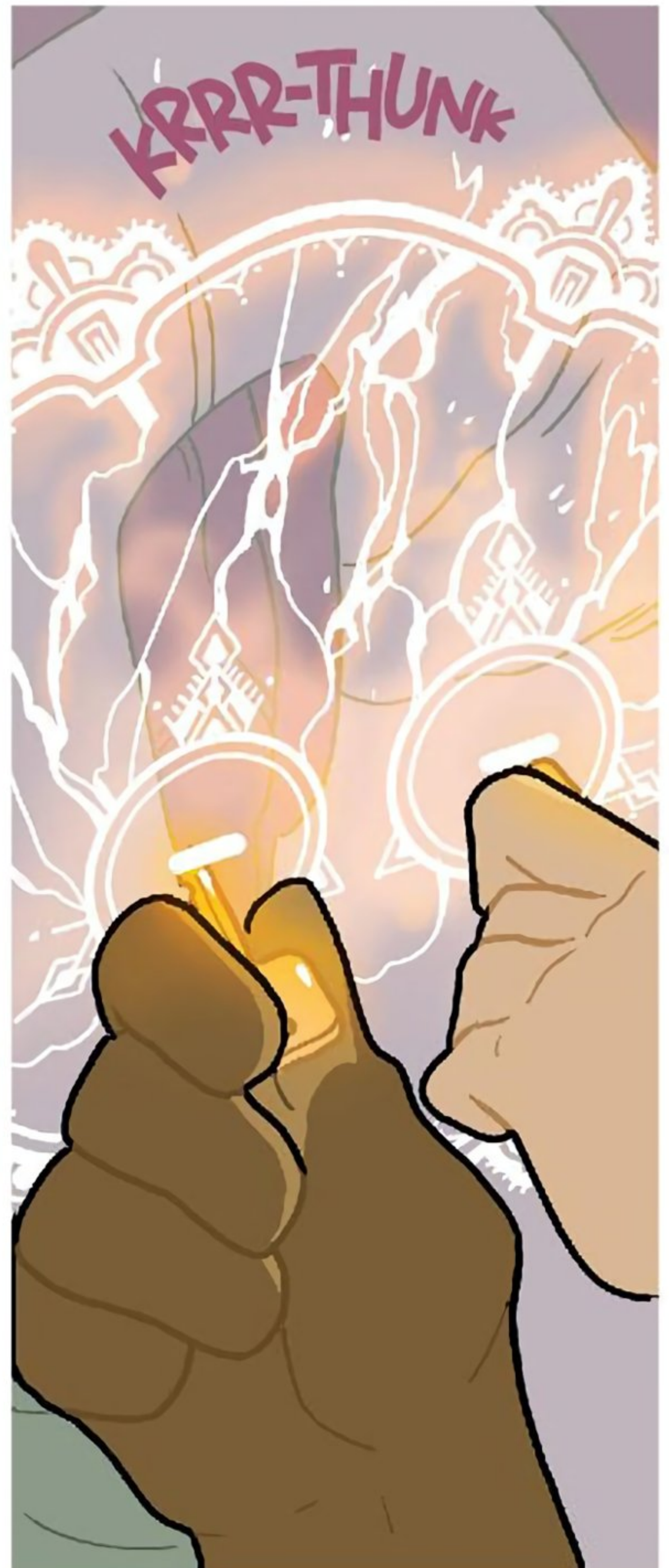


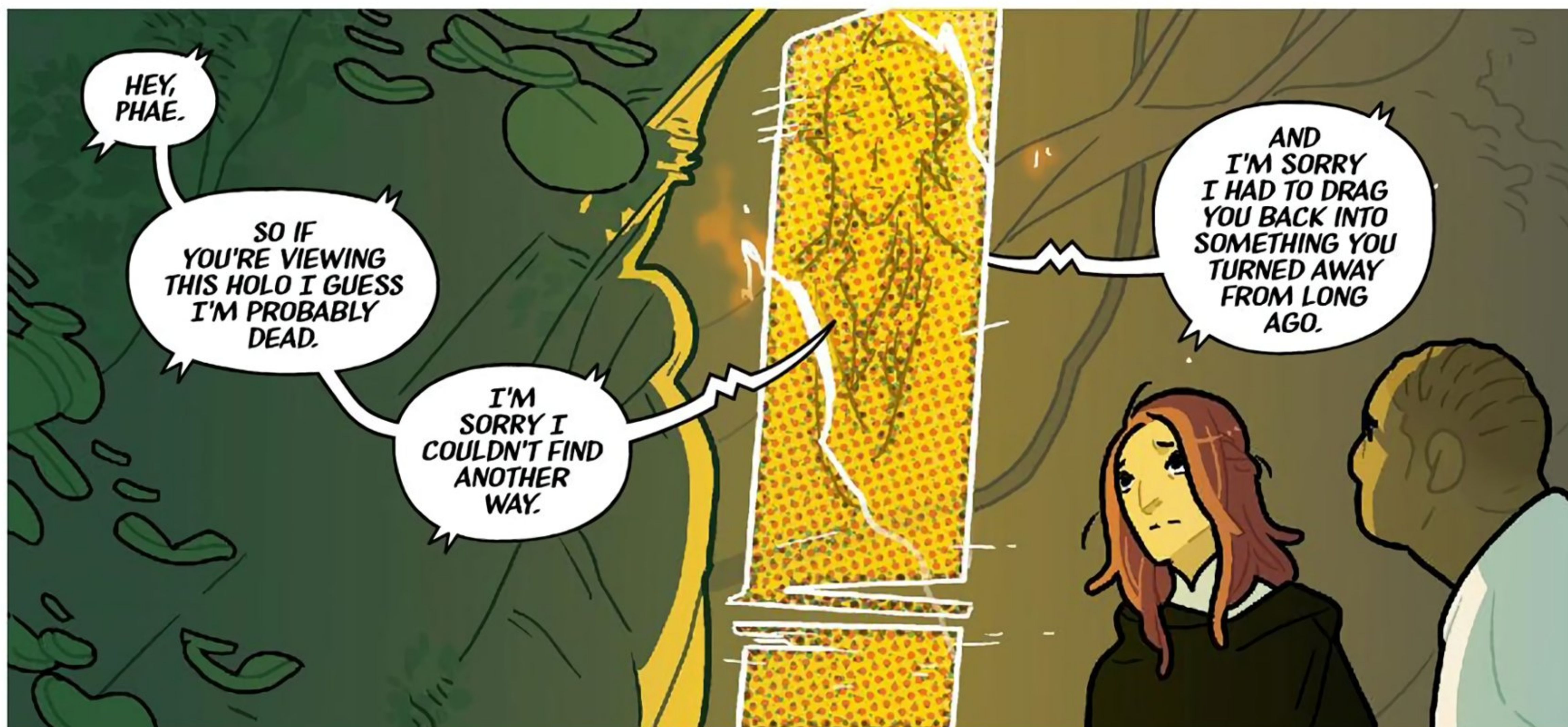
I'M NOT SURE WHAT YOU'RE COMPLAINING ABOUT, I'VE SPENT MOST OF MY TIME SO FAR ON THIS CASE BEING UNCONSCIOUS...NOT BY CHOICE.

FAIR ENOUGH. JUST...LET ME IN, PHAEDRA.









HEY, PHAE.

SO IF YOU'RE VIEWING THIS HOLO I GUESS I'M PROBABLY DEAD.

I'M SORRY I COULDN'T FIND ANOTHER WAY.

AND I'M SORRY I HAD TO DRAG YOU BACK INTO SOMETHING YOU TURNED AWAY FROM LONG AGO.



I...I JUST COULDN'T THINK OF ANOTHER WAY. WHICH MAKES SENSE I GUESS, YOU WERE ALWAYS THE SMART ONE. THAT ALWAYS MADE ME FEEL SO SAFE, HOW SMART YOU WERE.

WE COULD DO ANYTHING TOGETHER... BUT AFTER YOU LEFT. I DON'T KNOW...



I TRIED. FOR A LONG TIME I TRIED, BUT IT NEVER WORKED. NOT A BIT. NOT EVEN CLOSE.

WITHOUT YOU I WAS JUST... I DON'T KNOW, HALF OF WHAT I NEEDED TO BE.

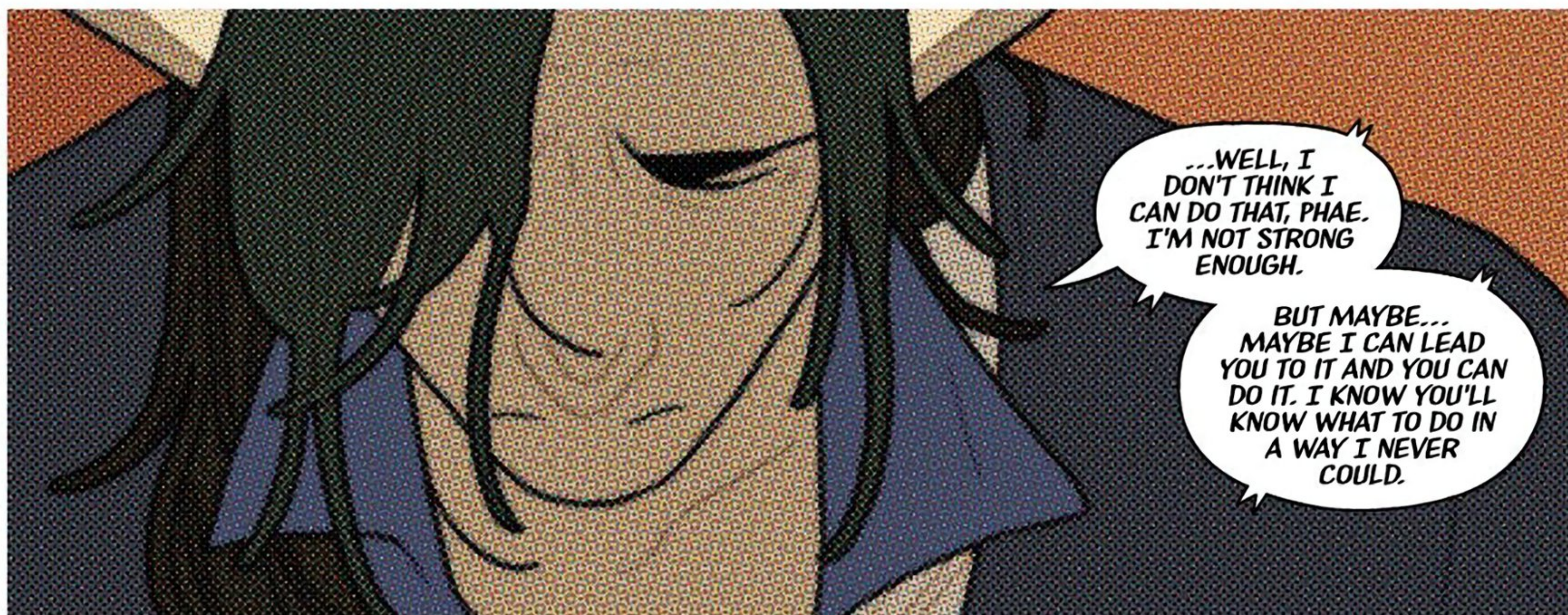
MY MOTHER GOT EVEN WORSE AS TIME WENT ON. LESS AND LESS OPEN WITH ME, LESS AND LESS FLEXIBLE ABOUT THE FUTURE, LESS AND LESS INTERESTED IN THE IDEA THAT I MIGHT ONE DAY MAKE A GOOD KING.



AND THEN WHEN I FOUND IT... WHEN I FOUND IT, I JUST... UNWOUND, PHAE.

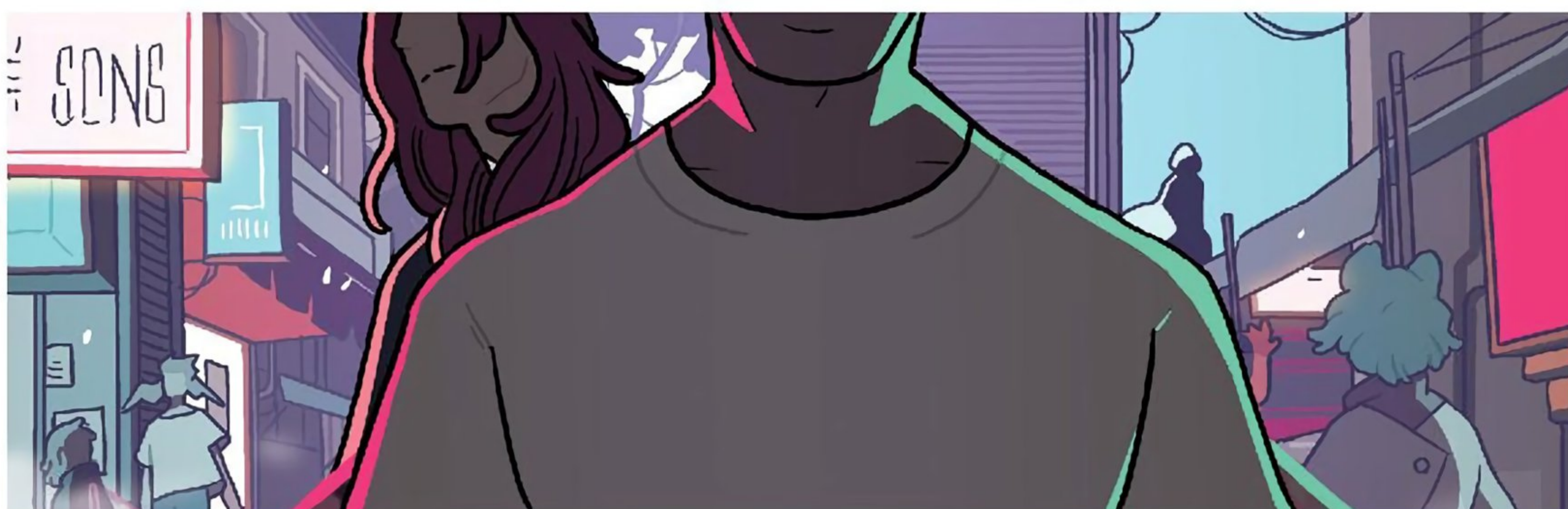
THE INJUSTICE OF IT... IT BROKE SOMETHING INSIDE ME. MAYBE JUST MY HEART?

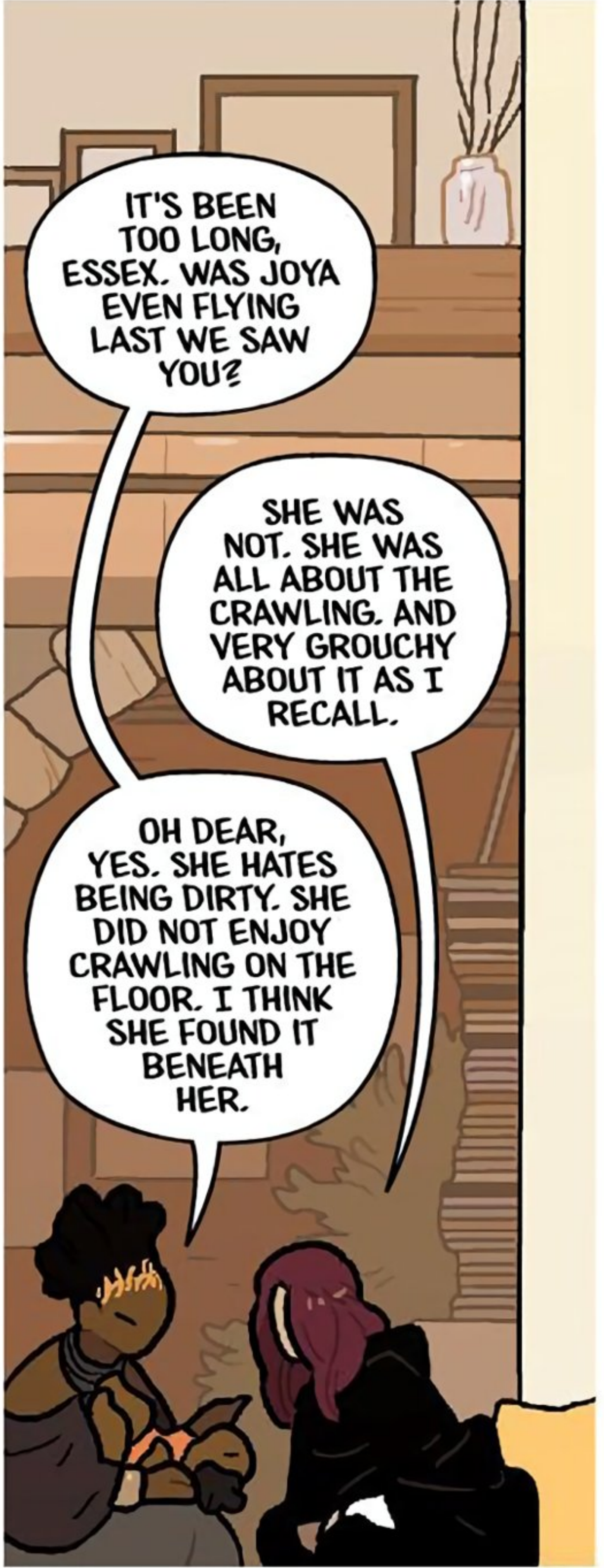
BUT I JUST... I KNOW SOMETHING MUST BE DONE, BUT I'M NOT SURE WHAT OR HOW... AND I THINK MAYBE THE THING THAT SHOULD BE DONE...



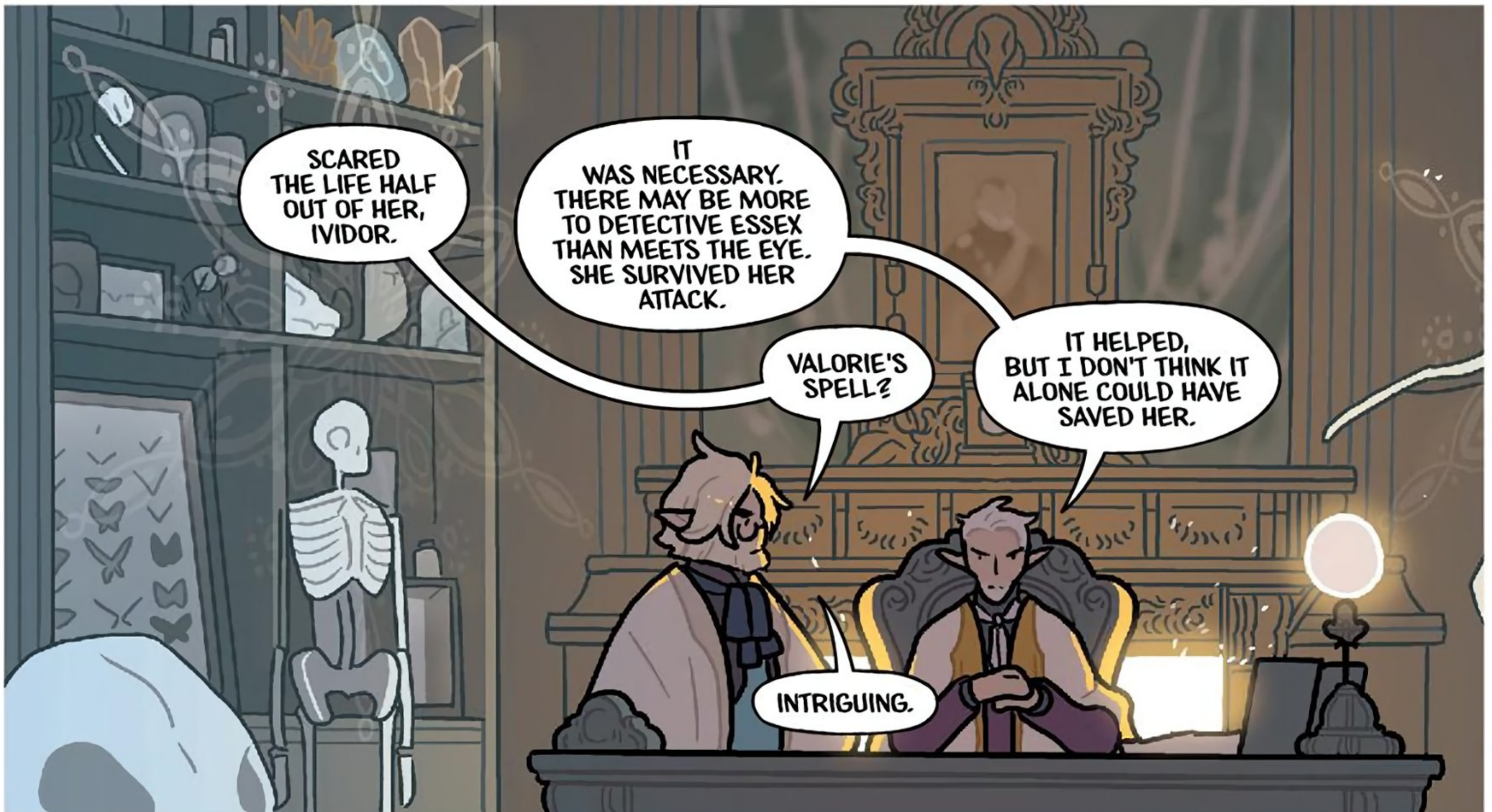
...WELL, I DON'T THINK I CAN DO THAT, PHAE. I'M NOT STRONG ENOUGH.

BUT MAYBE... MAYBE I CAN LEAD YOU TO IT AND YOU CAN DO IT. I KNOW YOU'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO IN A WAY I NEVER COULD.







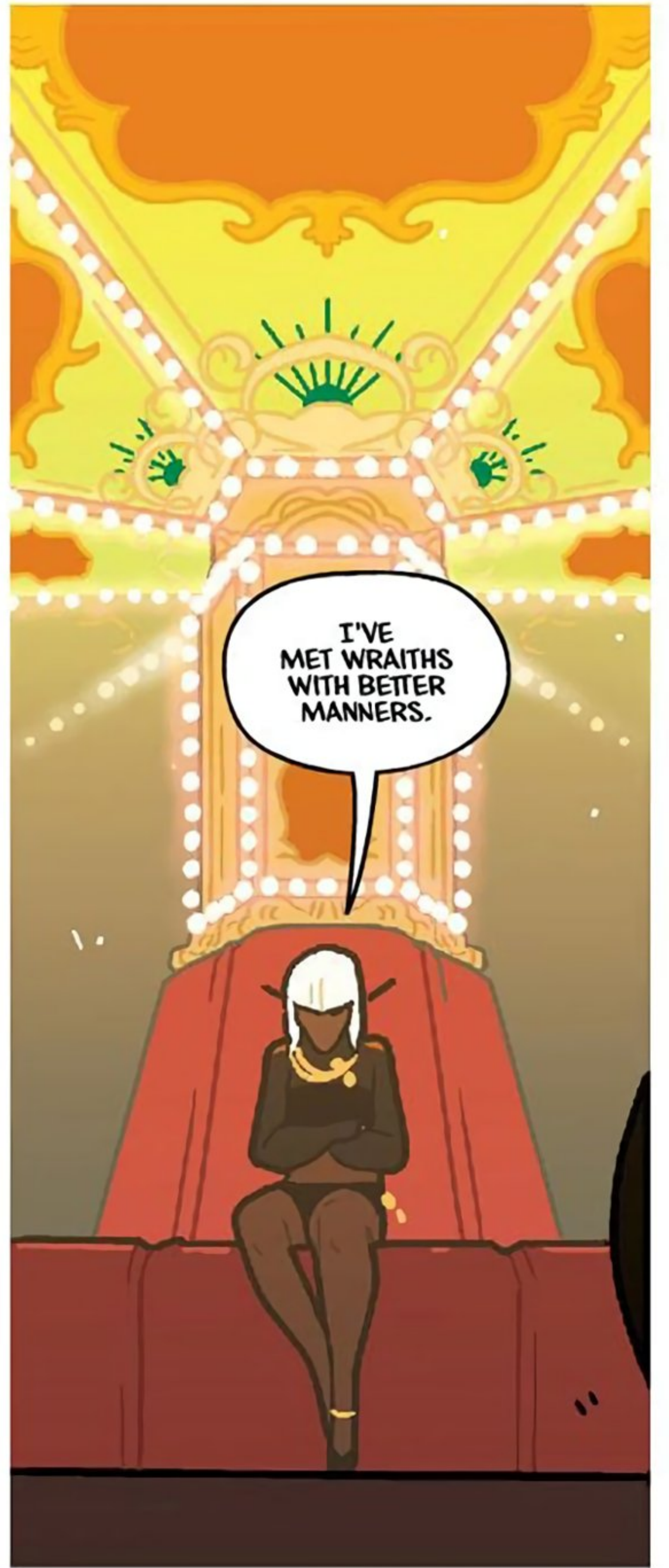










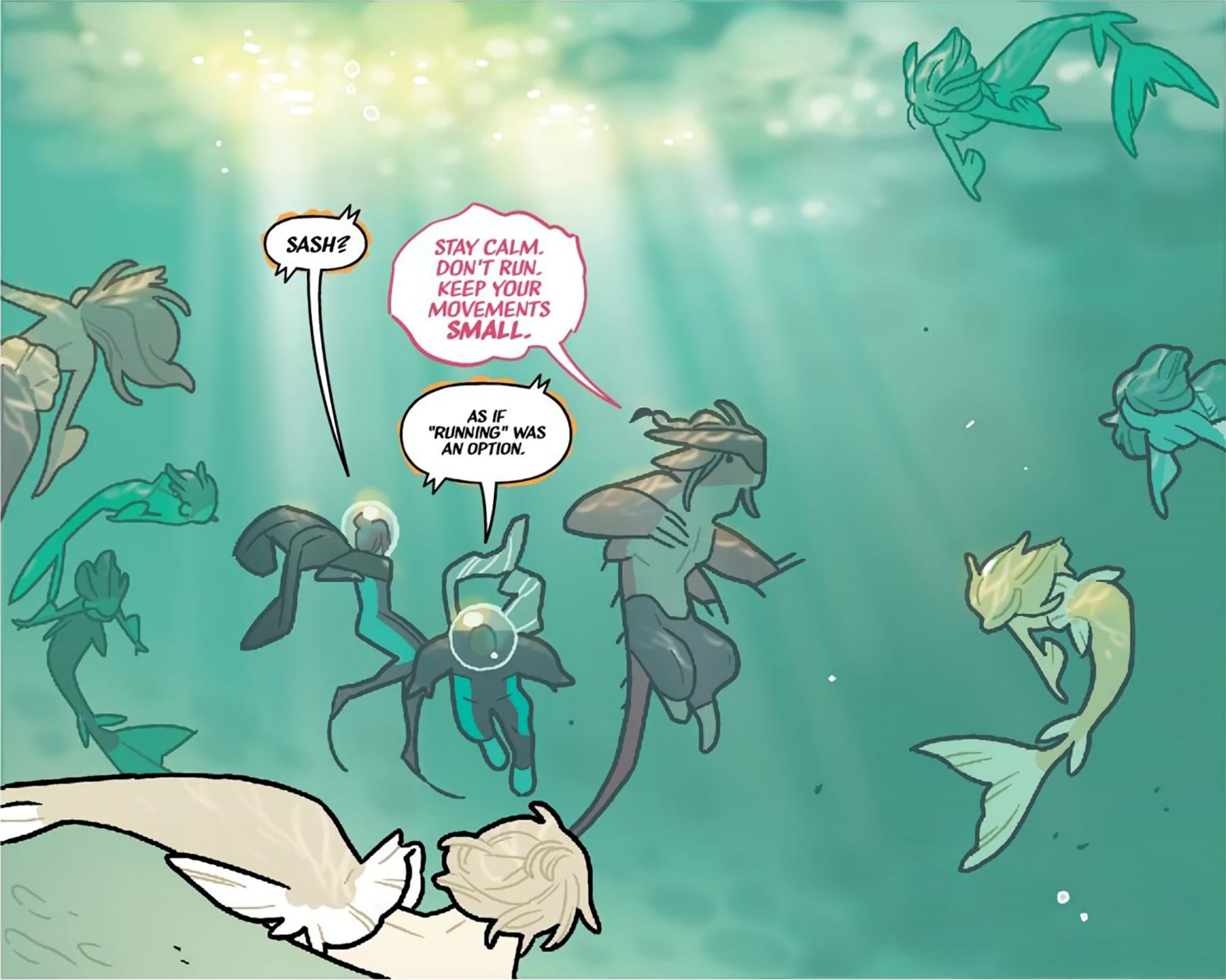


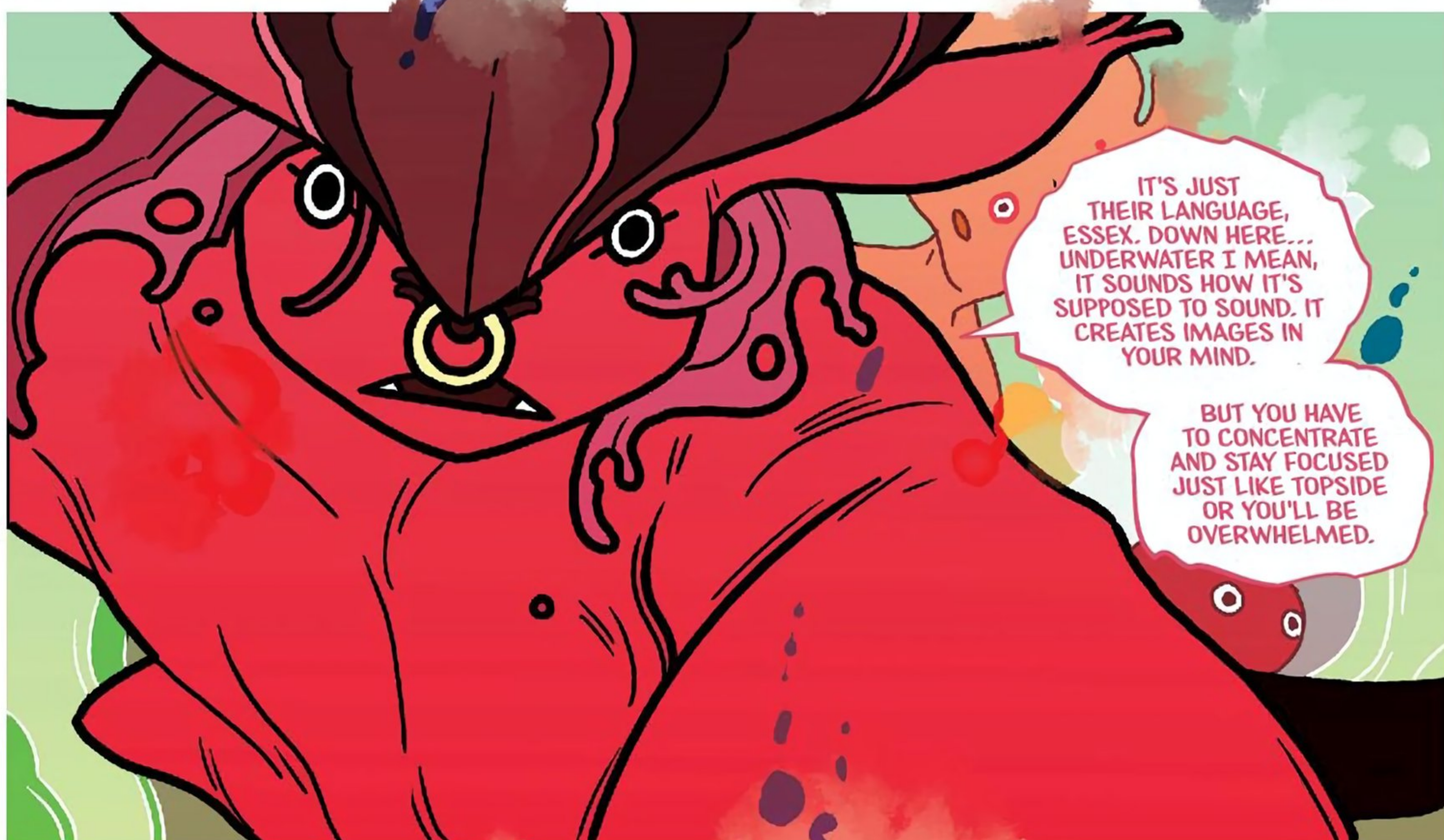


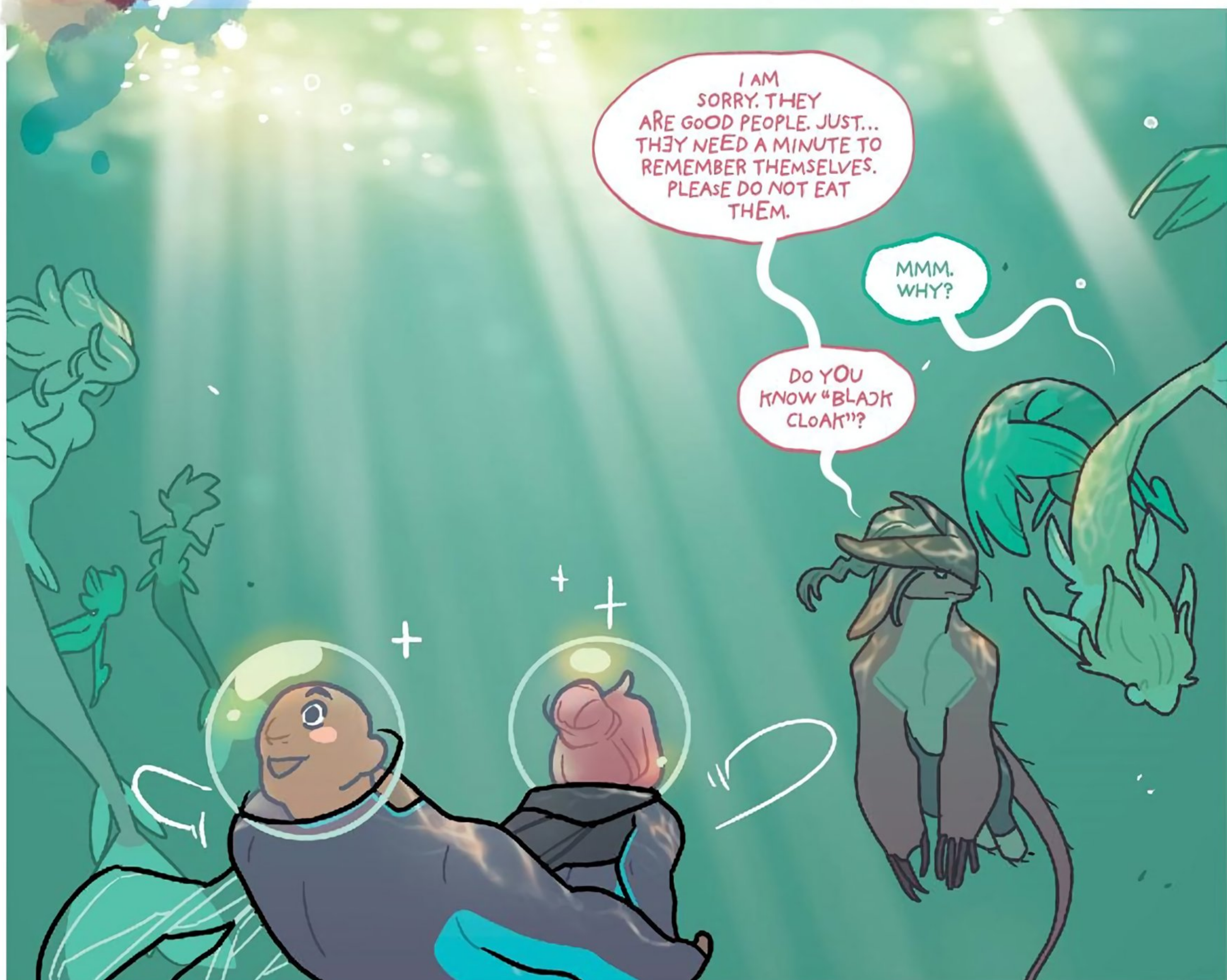




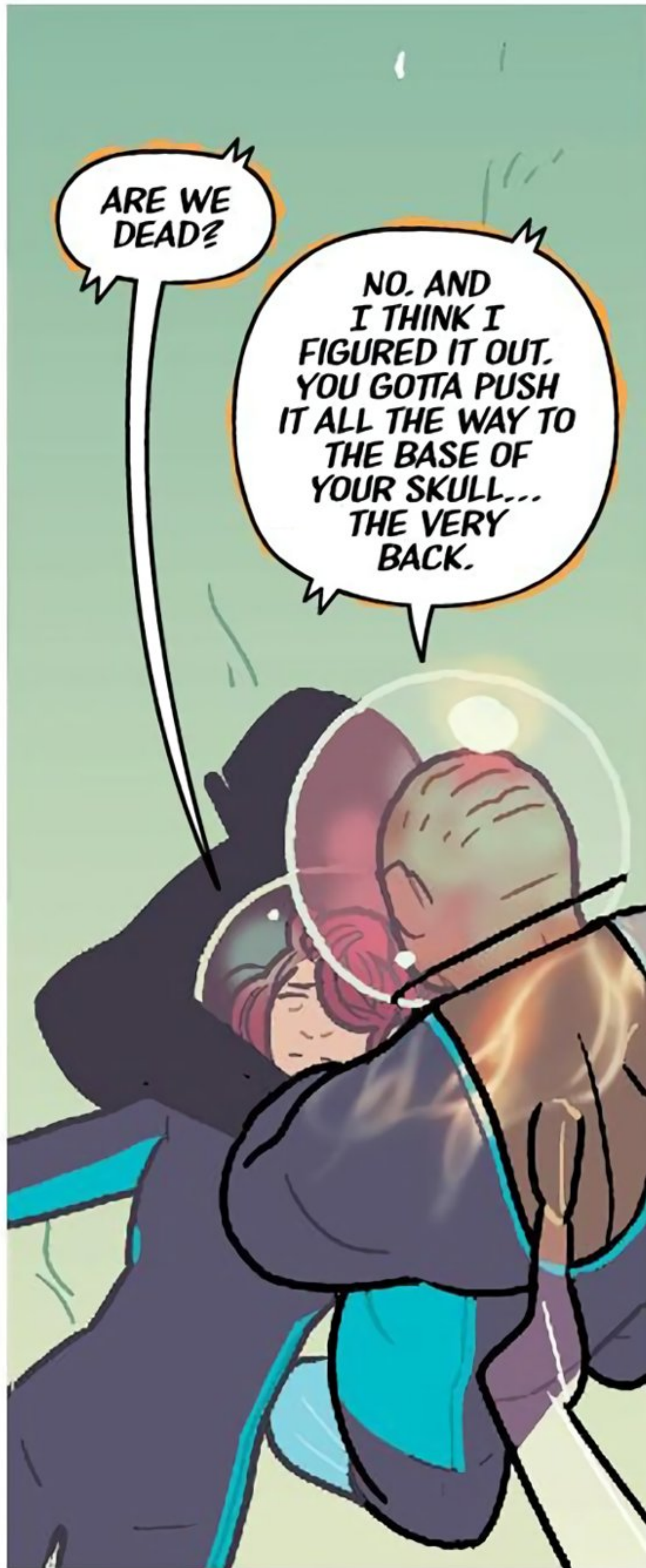


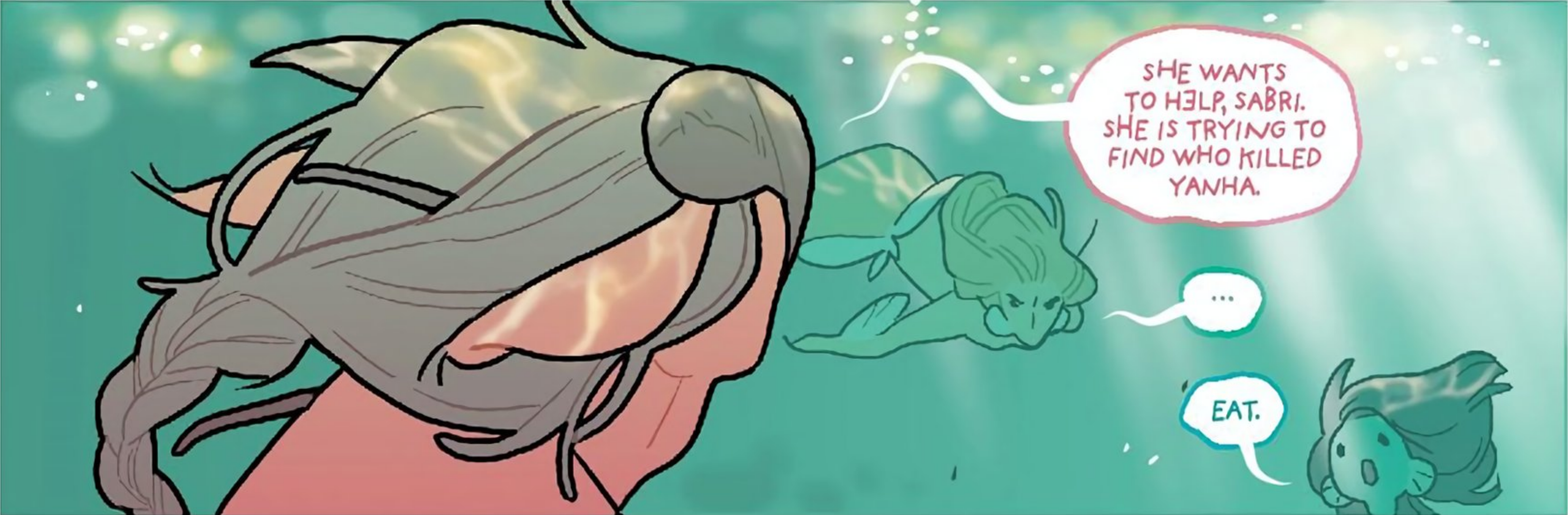


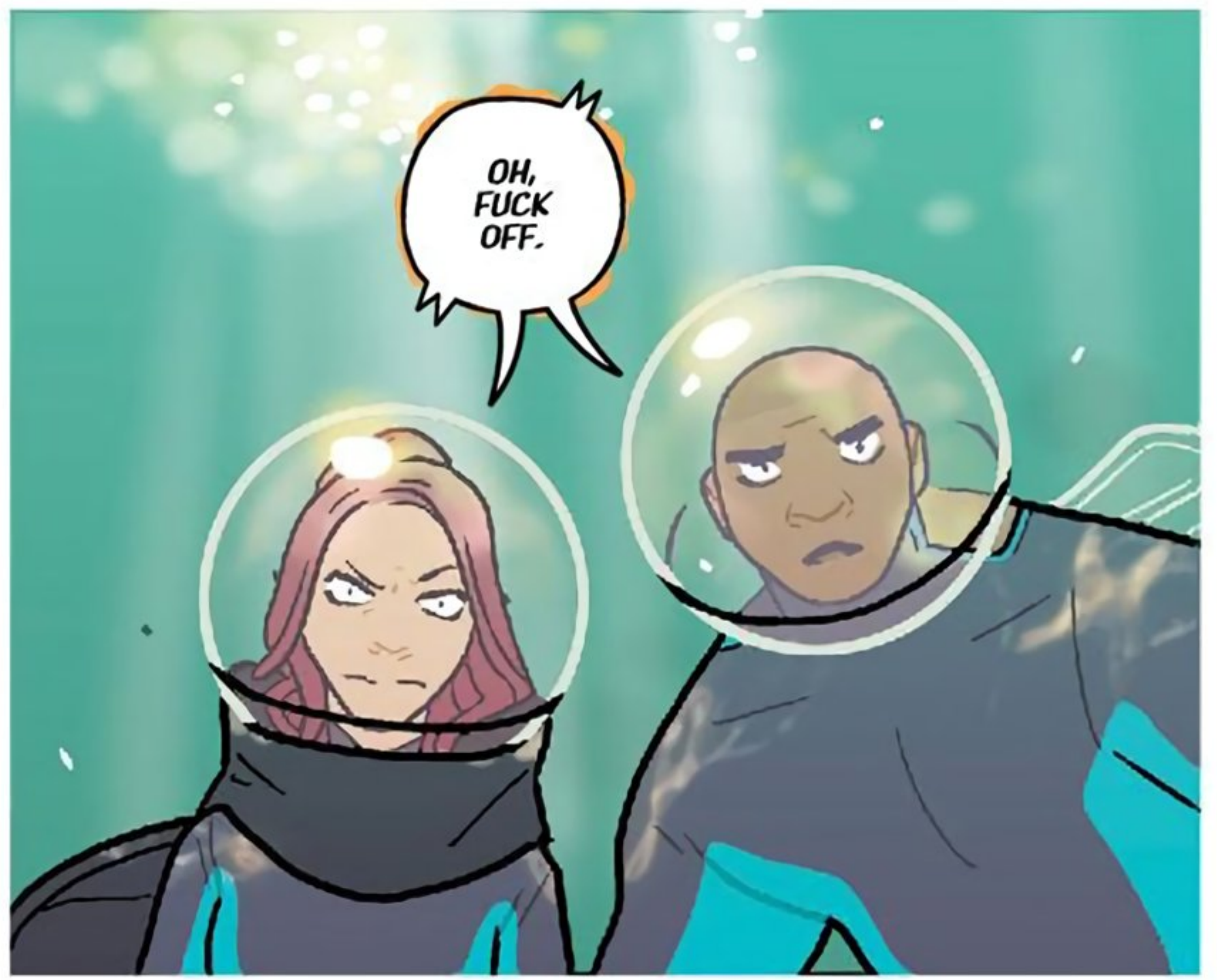












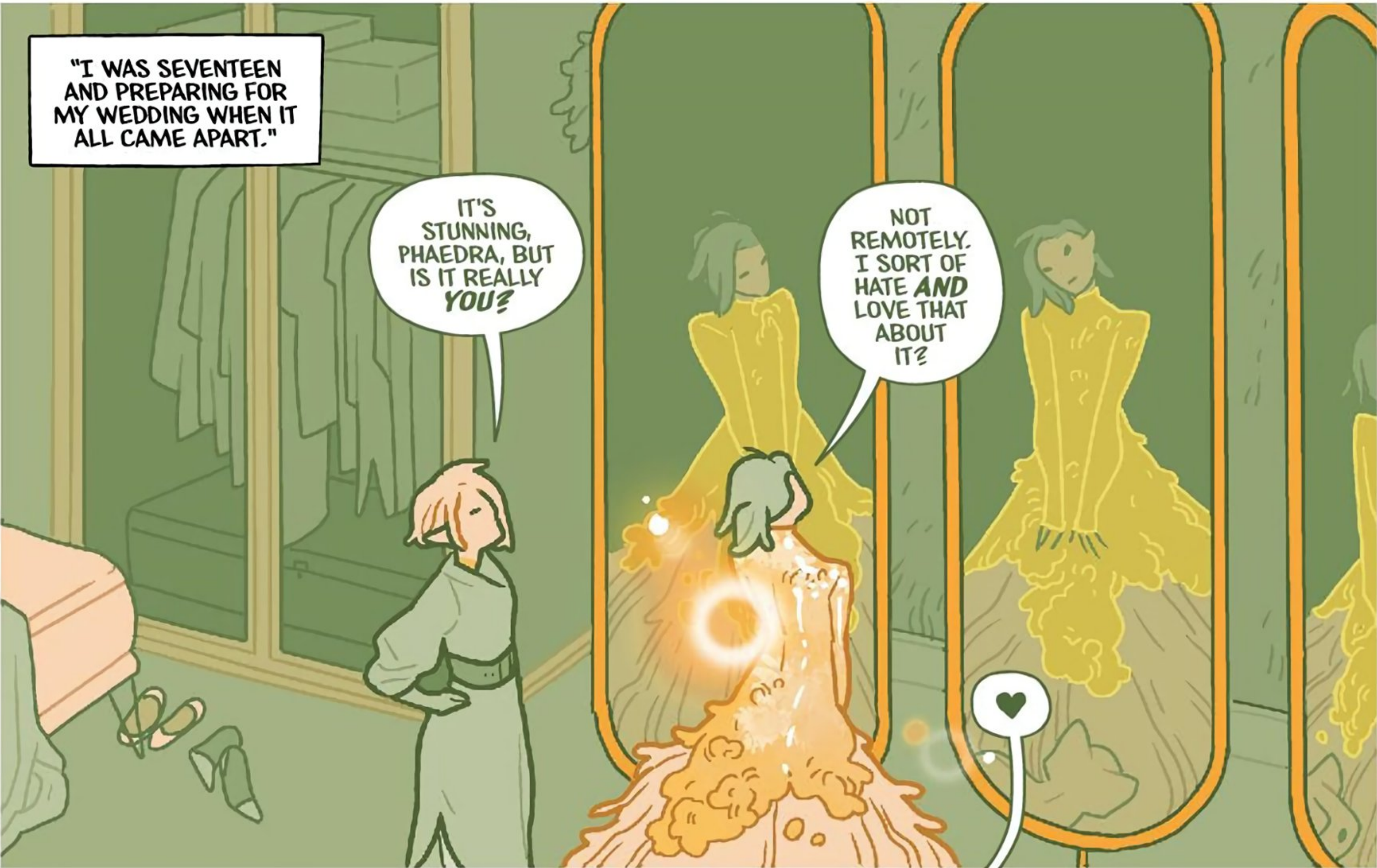












"BEFORE I WAS EVEN BORN, MY FATE WAS TO MARRY FREYAL, TO ONE DAY RULE ALL OF KIROS AT HIS SIDE. TIPPING MY HAND THAT DAY TO MY MOTHER... IT CHANGED EVERYTHING.

"I WAS ALWAYS SORT OF PROUD OF THAT...LIKE I WAS SO SPECIAL THAT I COULDN'T BE BOUND BY FATE.

"BUT WHAT IF I HAD IT WRONG? WHAT IF I DID EXACTLY WHAT I WAS SUPPOSED TO DO?"



"WHAT IF MY FATE WAS SOMETHING EVEN BIGGER AND MORE IMPORTANT?"

HOW LONG?

...SIX MONTHS.

THEY STOPPED GROWING?

I THINK SO.



OH PHAEDRA... I'M SO SORRY, MY DARLING. I THOUGHT-- I THOUGHT WE HAD MAYBE GOTTEN AWAY WITH IT.

MOM?



...MOM?



I...YOUR FATHER WAS DIFFERENT WHEN HE CAME BACK FROM THE LAST WAR. GONE WAS THE KIND, FUNNY MAN I HAD LOVED. HE WAS HAUNTED AND...LOST. I WAS LONELY AND FELL IN LOVE, LIKE ANY OTHER OLD FOOL.

WE ENDED IT WHEN I REALIZED I WAS PREGNANT. WE HOPED...WE HOPED IT WOULD ALL BE ALL RIGHT. THAT WE HAD ESCAPED BEFORE DESTROYING BOTH OUR FRAGILE LIVES. THAT WE COULD LIVE WITH JUST THE MEMORY OF WHAT WE'D HAD.



AND I...I JUST LET MYSELF BELIEVE IT ALL THIS TIME... I DID.

EXCEPT YOU'RE JUST LIKE HIM AND SO OF COURSE I KNEW. I ALWAYS KNEW.



MOTHER. WHO IS MY FATHER?





"I WANTED TO FIND HIM. KILL HIM. HUG HIM. SCREAM AT HIM.

"TO EVEN KNOW HIM.



"BUT ANY OF THIS WOULD BE A DEATH SENTENCE FOR MY MOTHER. POSSIBLY FOR ME--MAYBE THE ENTIRE ESSEX LINE, SINCE MY FATHER HAD ALREADY PASSED ON.

"IN THAT MOMENT I WENT FROM THE GIRL WHO HAD EVERYTHING TO THE GIRL WHO HAD LOST EVERYTHING.



"NOT ONLY WAS MY FAMILY TORN APART, BUT MY FUTURE HAD EVAPORATED LIKE MIST.

"I COULDN'T MARRY HIM. NOT WHEN MY LIFE WAS A LIE.

"NOT ONLY COULD I NOT LIVE EVERY DAY BY HIS SIDE AND KEEP THE TRUTH FROM HIM, BUT I ALSO COULD NOT DRAG HOUSE SIDRA INTO THE MESS THAT HOUSE ESSEX HAD JUST BECOME.

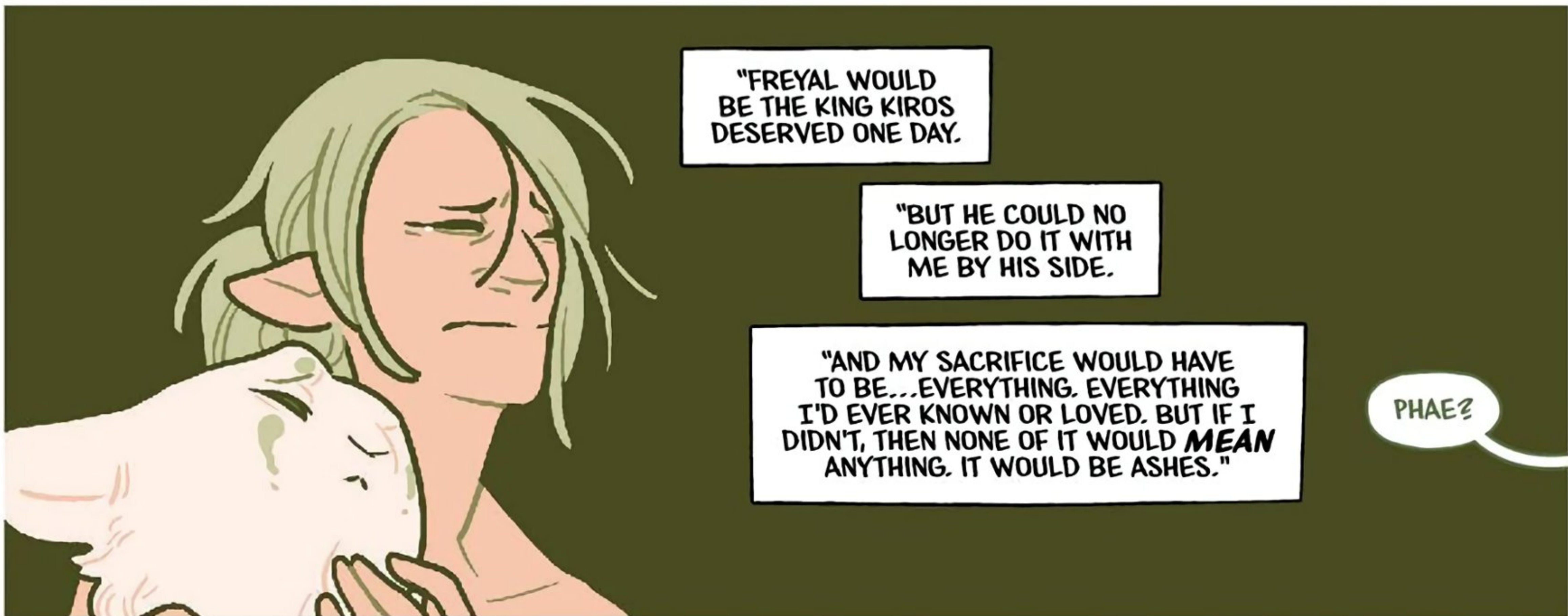


"IF DISCOVERED, WE WOULD BE DESTROYED. AND A CHILD OF OURS WOULD ALWAYS BE QUESTIONED. IT WOULD NEVER BE SAFE."

YOU HAVE TO PROMISE ME YOU'LL STAY WITH HIM, MISTER STARLIGHT. HE'LL NEED YOU SO MUCH.

RREEEE??

I KNOW. I'LL MISS YOU TOO.



"FREYAL WOULD BE THE KING KIROS DESERVED ONE DAY.

"BUT HE COULD NO LONGER DO IT WITH ME BY HIS SIDE.

"AND MY SACRIFICE WOULD HAVE TO BE...EVERYTHING. EVERYTHING I'D EVER KNOWN OR LOVED. BUT IF I DIDN'T, THEN NONE OF IT WOULD **MEAN** ANYTHING. IT WOULD BE ASHES."

PHAE??







"THERE WAS A BIT MORE TO IT THAN THAT, OF COURSE. BUT IT ALL HAPPENED VERY FAST."

RREEEE?

"EXILE CERTAINLY HURT MY FAMILY'S STANDING AND IT'S WHY HADRIAN LOATHES ME, BUT EXILE WAS NOTHING COMPARED TO WHAT DISCOVERY WOULD HAVE MEANT."

"IT WAS THE SAFEST CHOICE FOR EVERYONE."



BUT YOU LOST EVERYTHING.



BUT LOOK WHAT I FOUND.



I SHOULD GET GOING. THEY'LL COME LOOKING FOR ME HERE EVENTUALLY.

DO YOU AND PAX HAVE A PLAN?

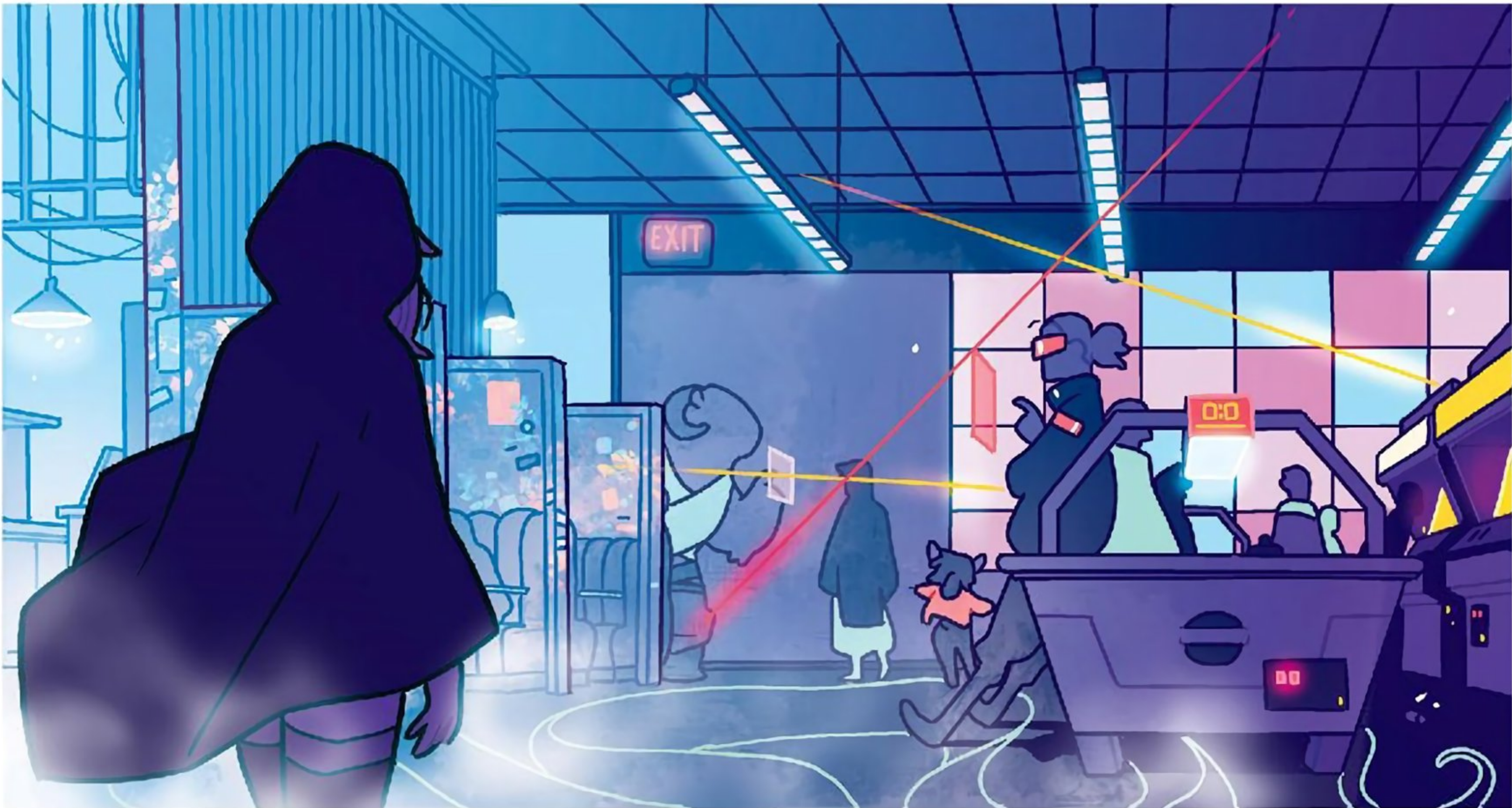
SORT OF.



THAT SOUNDS ABOUT RIGHT.

HEH.

I SENT FREYAL'S TOX SCREEN TO YOU. YOU SHOULD LOOK AT IT.





THE TREES.



AT LEAST
THE TREES ARE ONE
OF THE SAFEST PLACES
WE COULD GO. VERY
FEW CITIZENS GOING TO
CALL ANYTHING IN,
NO MATTER WHAT
THEY SEE.

TESTAMENT TO
WHAT FAILURES
WE ARE.



SPEAK FOR
YOURSELF.

THE
FACT THAT THE
PEOPLE WE WANT
TO HELP MOST ARE
STILL AFRAID OF US
DOESN'T BOTHER
YOU?

OF COURSE IT
DOES. IF YOU WANT TO
GET CAUGHT UP IN POLITICS,
ESSEX, THAT'S FINE FOR YOU,
BUT MY INTEREST LIES IN
HELPING THE PEOPLE. AND I
HAVE A JOB WHERE I CAN
ACTUALLY DO THAT. SO CAN
WE FOCUS ON *THAT*,
ESSEX?



YEAH.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
I'M SORRY. MY
THOUGHTS ARE...
DARK.

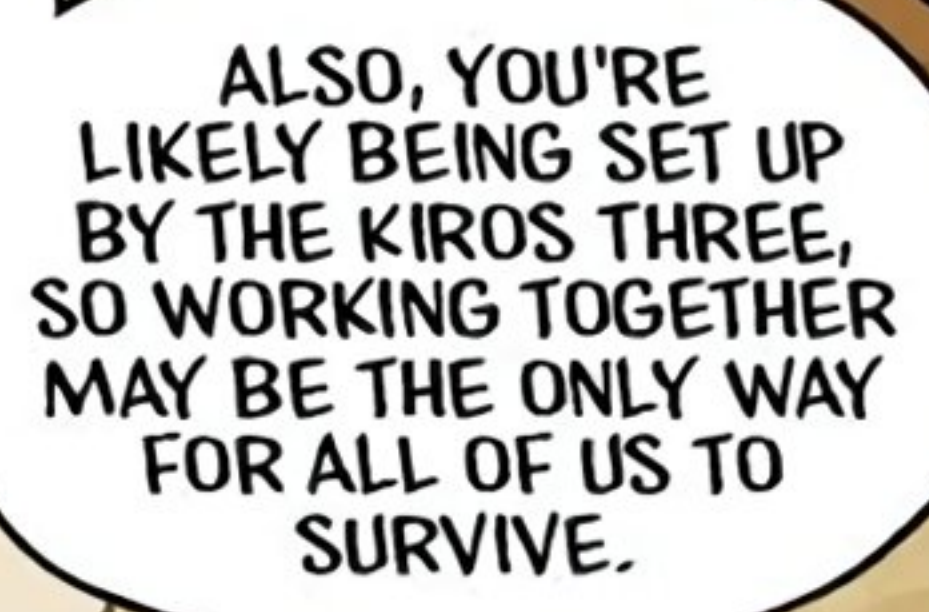
THERE.
THAT'S THE
HOUSE.



ARE YOU
KIDDING ME,
PHAE?!

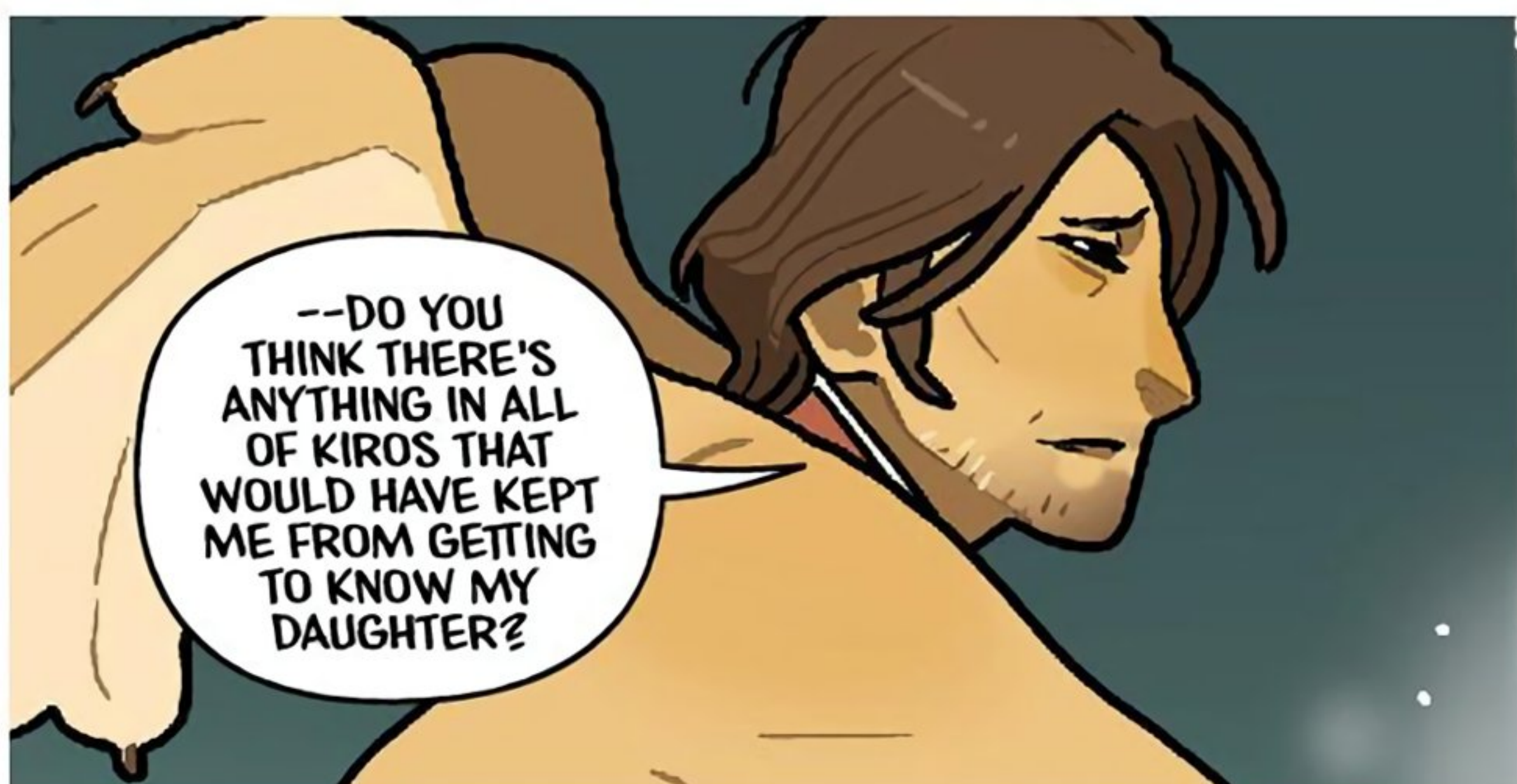


THE HOME OF PHINNEAS II
OF THANE, THE TREES.

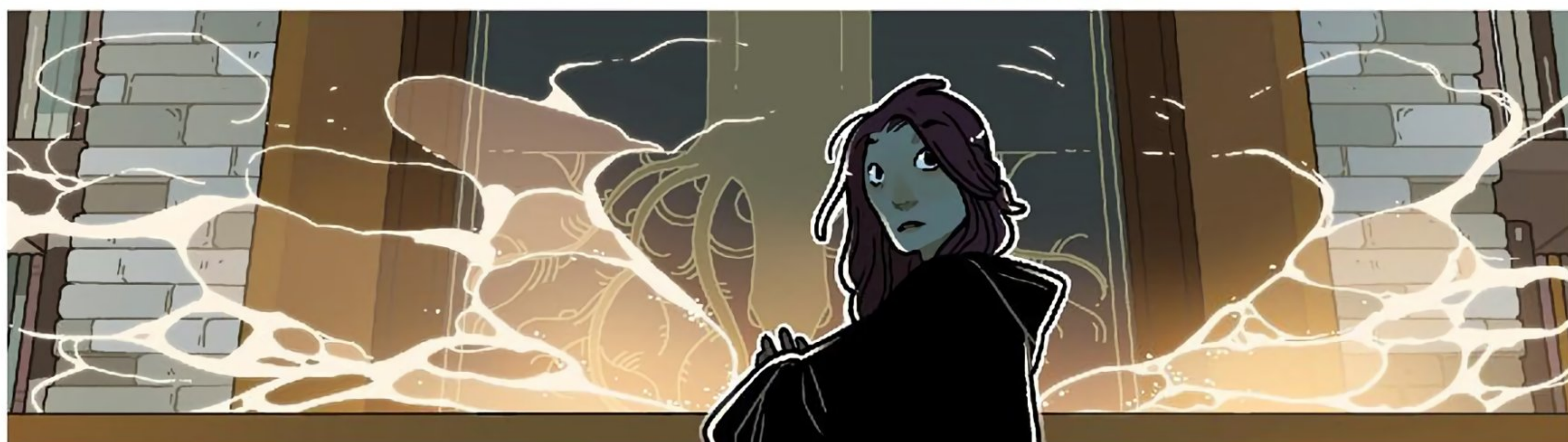






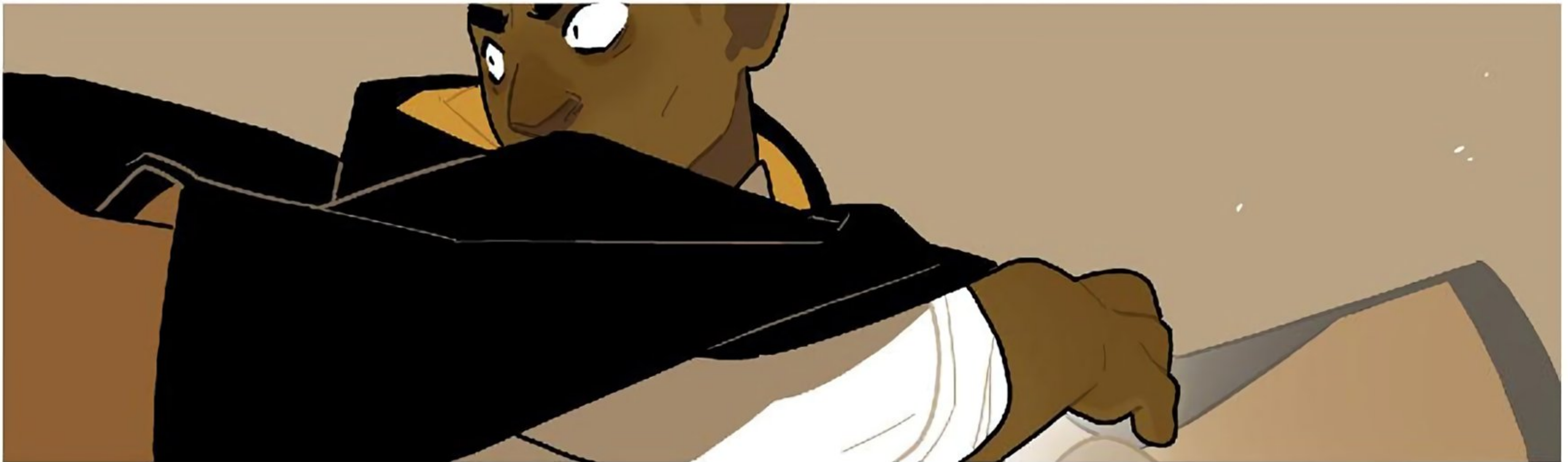






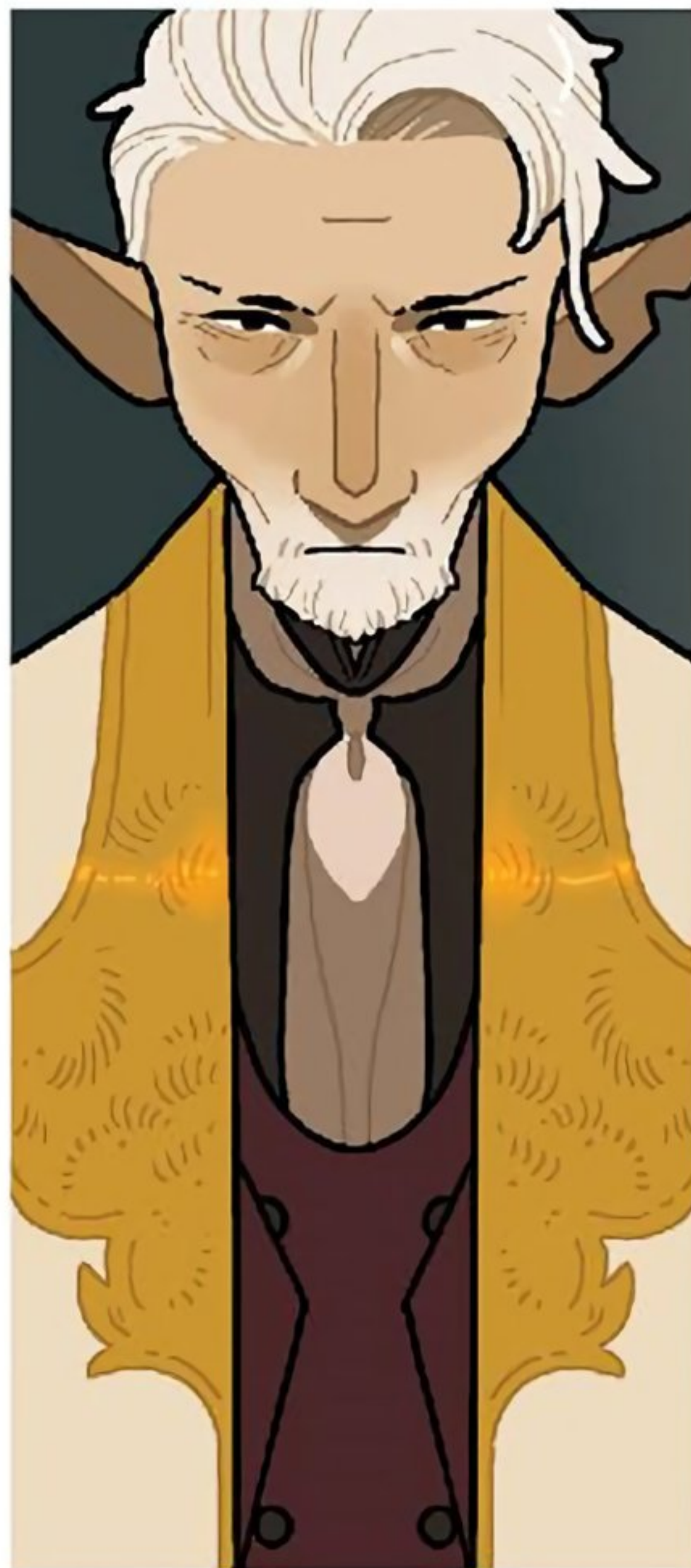


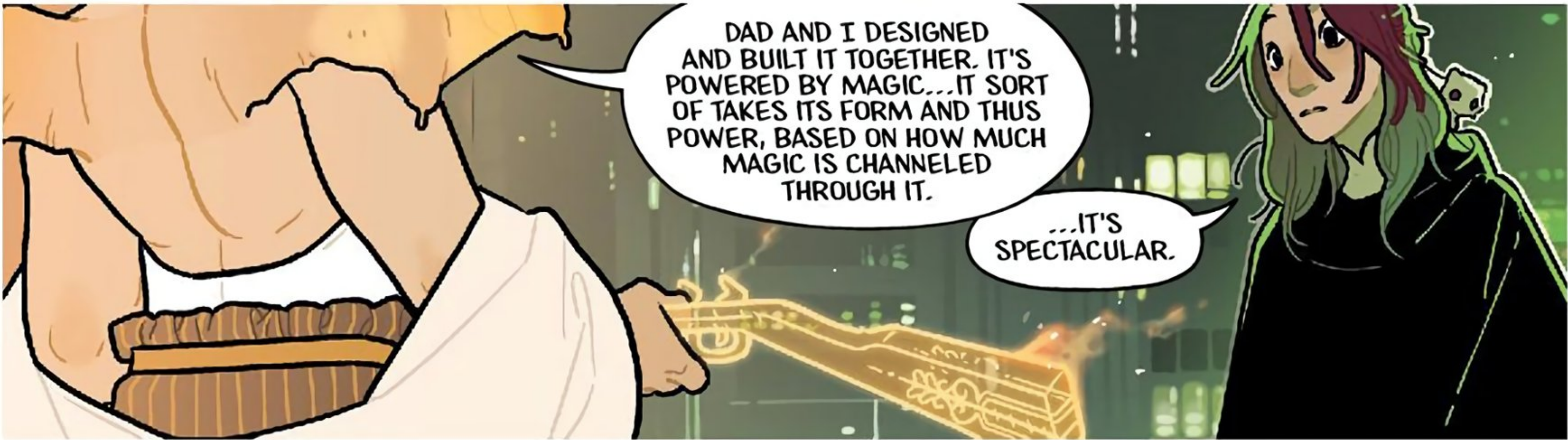




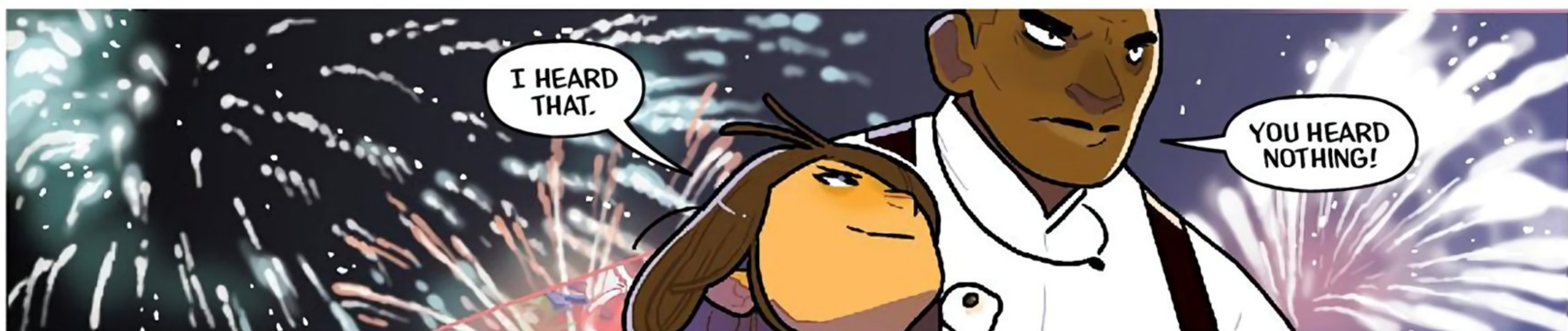
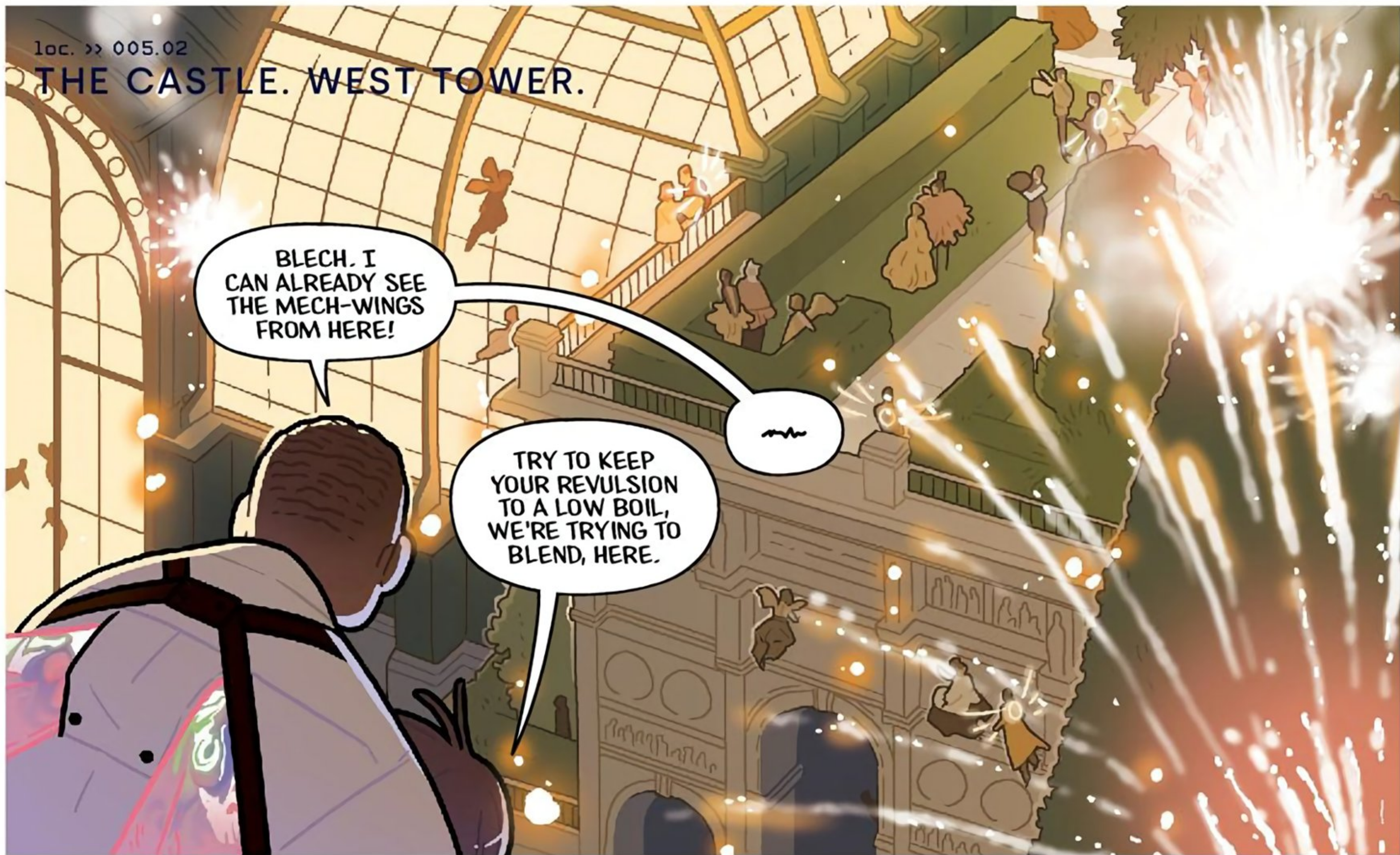














SHOULDN'T WE GO AWAY FROM THE PARTY?

WHAT DID I SAY ABOUT TRYING TO BLEND?

YEAH, BUT WE DON'T.

TRUE, BUT ALL THE TRICKS I KNOW ARE THIS WAY.



UH. IT'S BEEN A WHILE, ESSEX. YOU DON'T THINK SOME OF YOUR "TRICKS" HAVE MAYBE AGED OUT?

BLIND SPOT WORKED, DIDN'T IT?

HMMPH.



CREEEAAK

TOLDJA.



YEAH, YEAH, LET'S SEE WHAT ELSE YOU GOT, RICH KID.

YOU SEE THAT BIG STONE NEAR THE FLOOR? IT'S LOOSE. START PULLING IT OUT BECAUSE WE'RE GOING THROUGH.

I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHERE YOU TAKE ME NEXT.



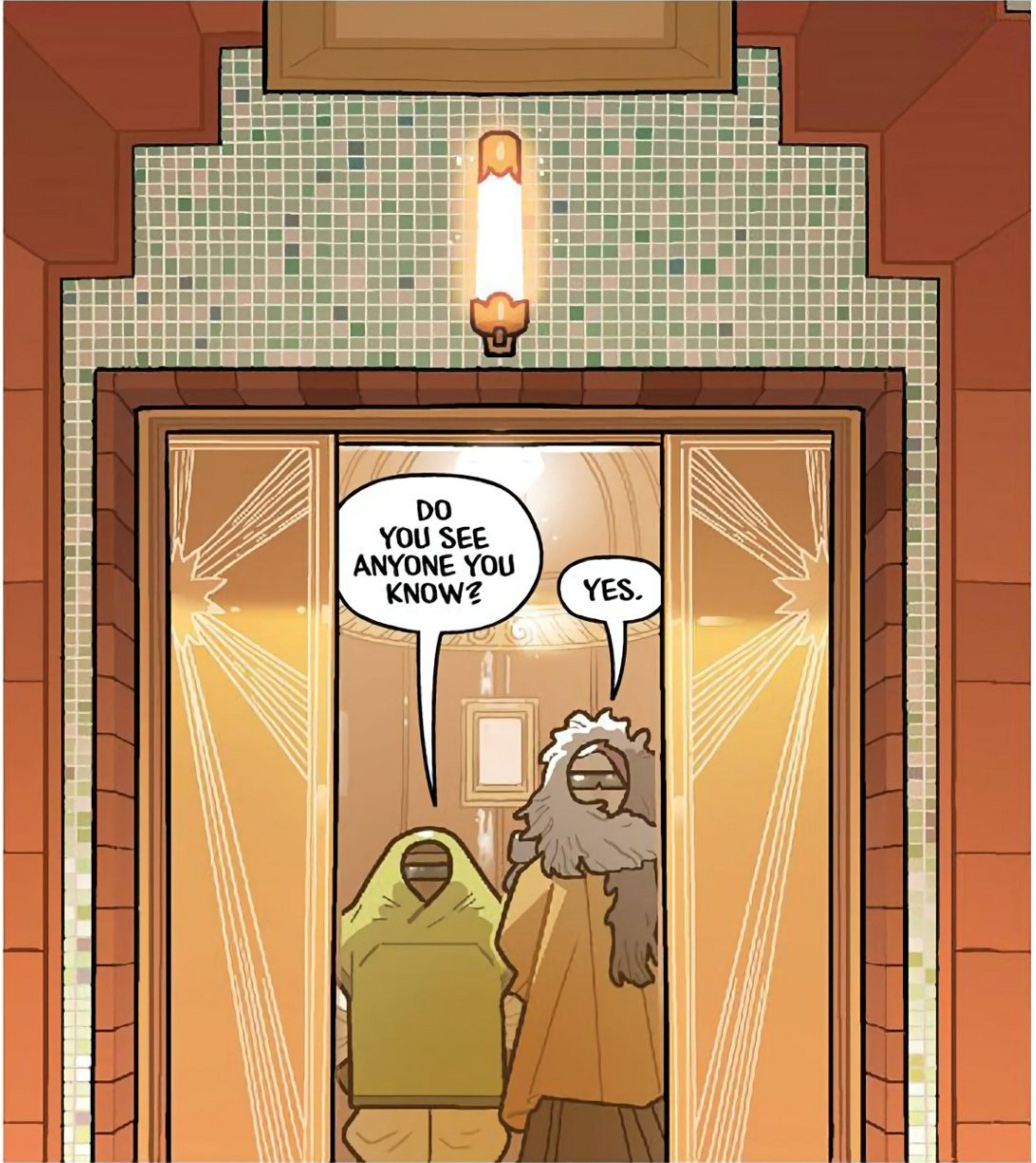
I TAKE IT BACK.

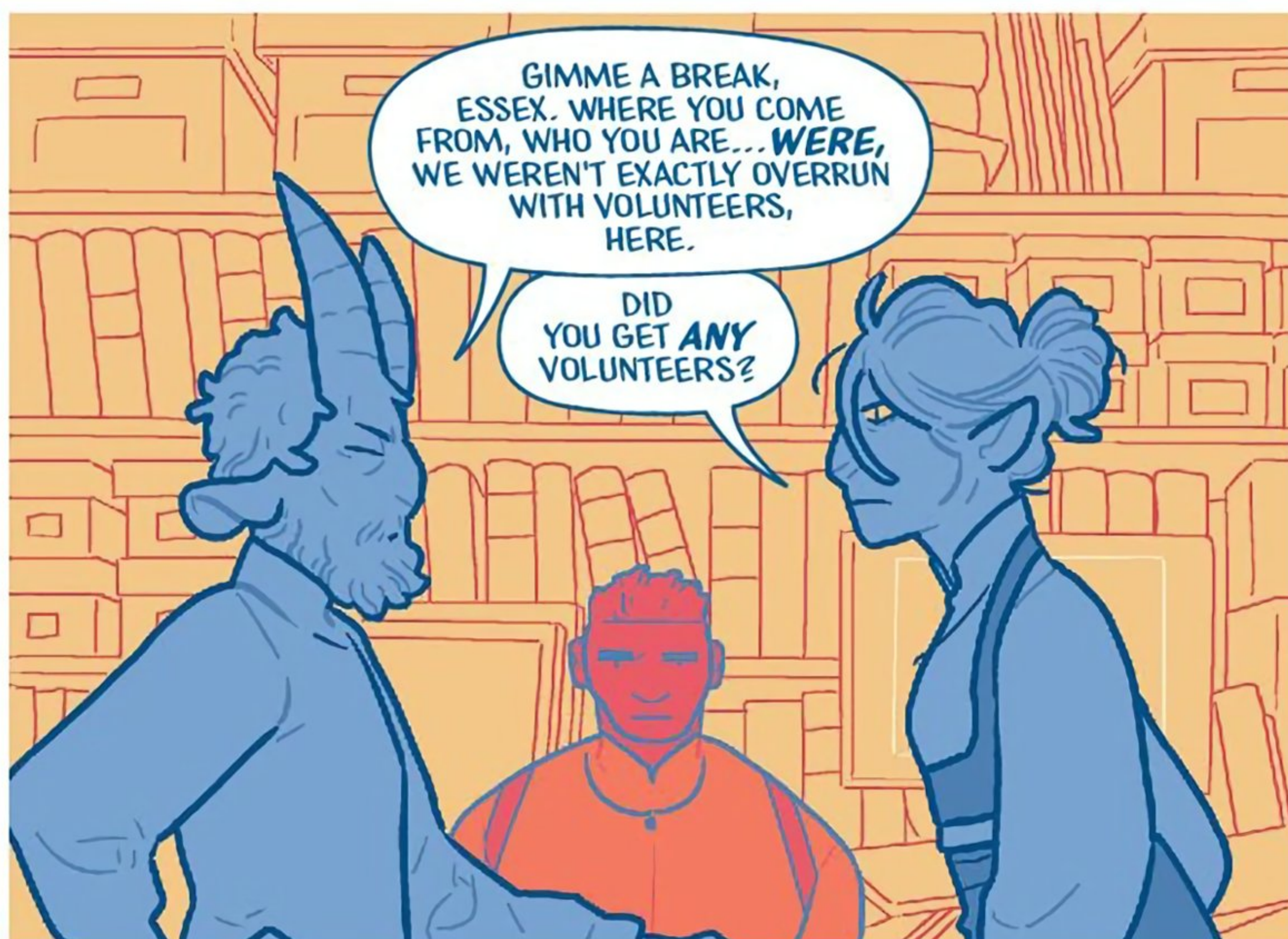
IT'S JUST A CLOSET, DON'T BE DRAMATIC.

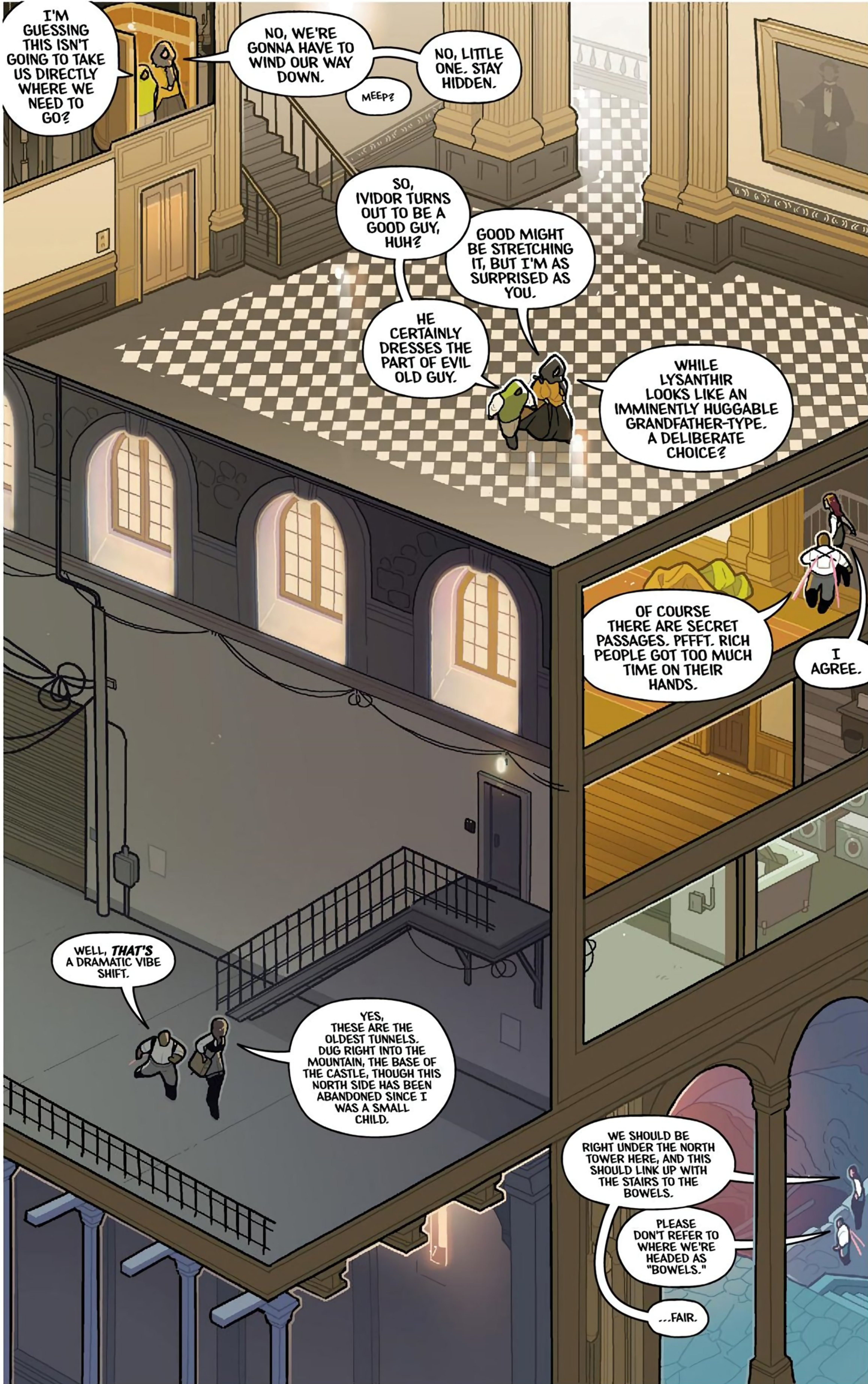
RIGHT, BUT YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE ME PUT SOME OF THIS ON, AREN'T YOU?

...YES.

I HATE YOU SO MUCH.







I'M GUESSING THIS ISN'T GOING TO TAKE US DIRECTLY WHERE WE NEED TO GO?

NO, WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO WIND OUR WAY DOWN.

MEEP?

NO, LITTLE ONE. STAY HIDDEN.

SO, IVIDOR TURNS OUT TO BE A GOOD GUY, HUH?

GOOD MIGHT BE STRETCHING IT, BUT I'M AS SURPRISED AS YOU.

HE CERTAINLY DRESSES THE PART OF EVIL OLD GUY.

WHILE LYSANTHIR LOOKS LIKE AN IMMINENTLY HUGGABLE GRANDFATHER-TYPE. A DELIBERATE CHOICE?

OF COURSE THERE ARE SECRET PASSAGES. PFFFT. RICH PEOPLE GOT TOO MUCH TIME ON THEIR HANDS.

I AGREE.

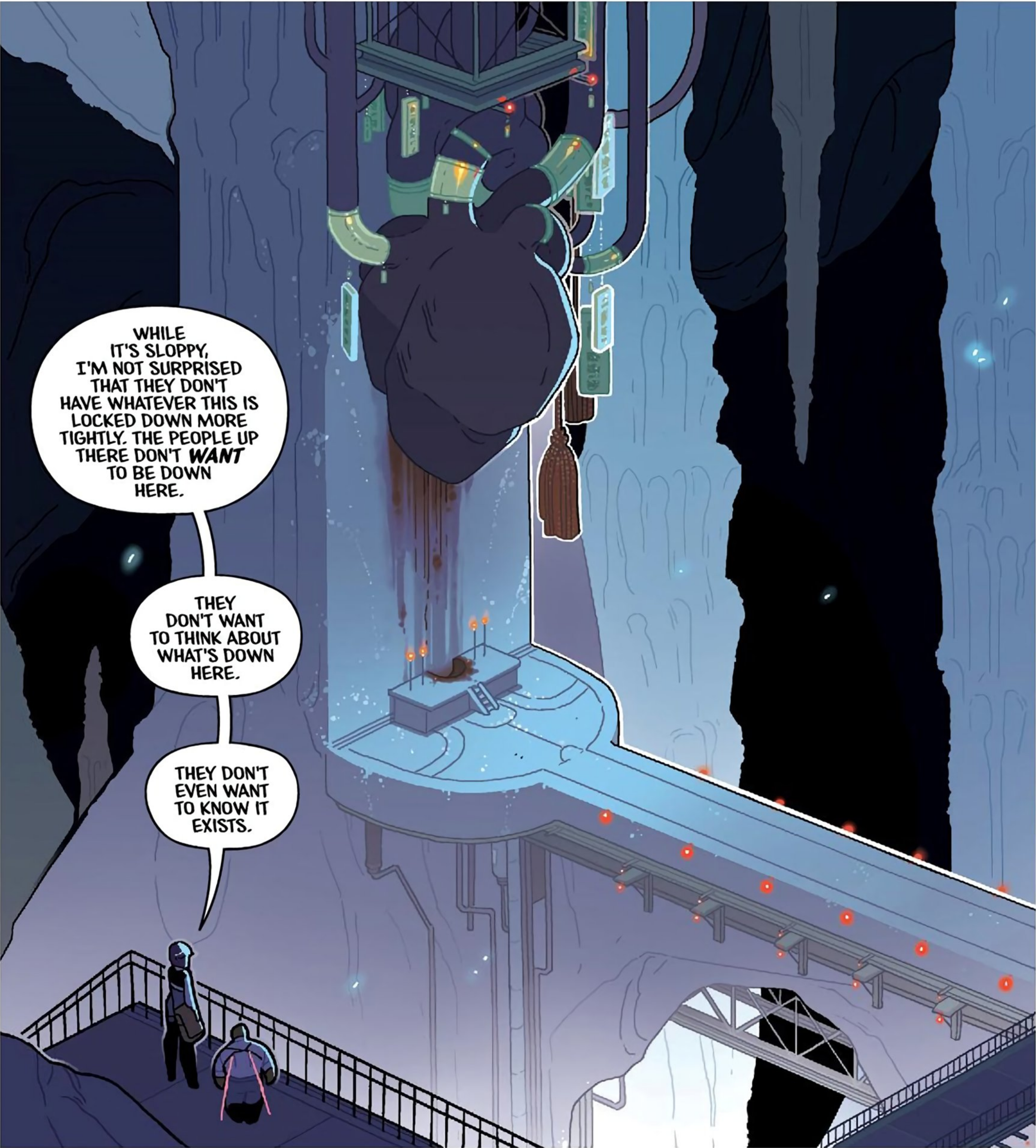
WELL, *THAT'S* A DRAMATIC VIBE SHIFT.

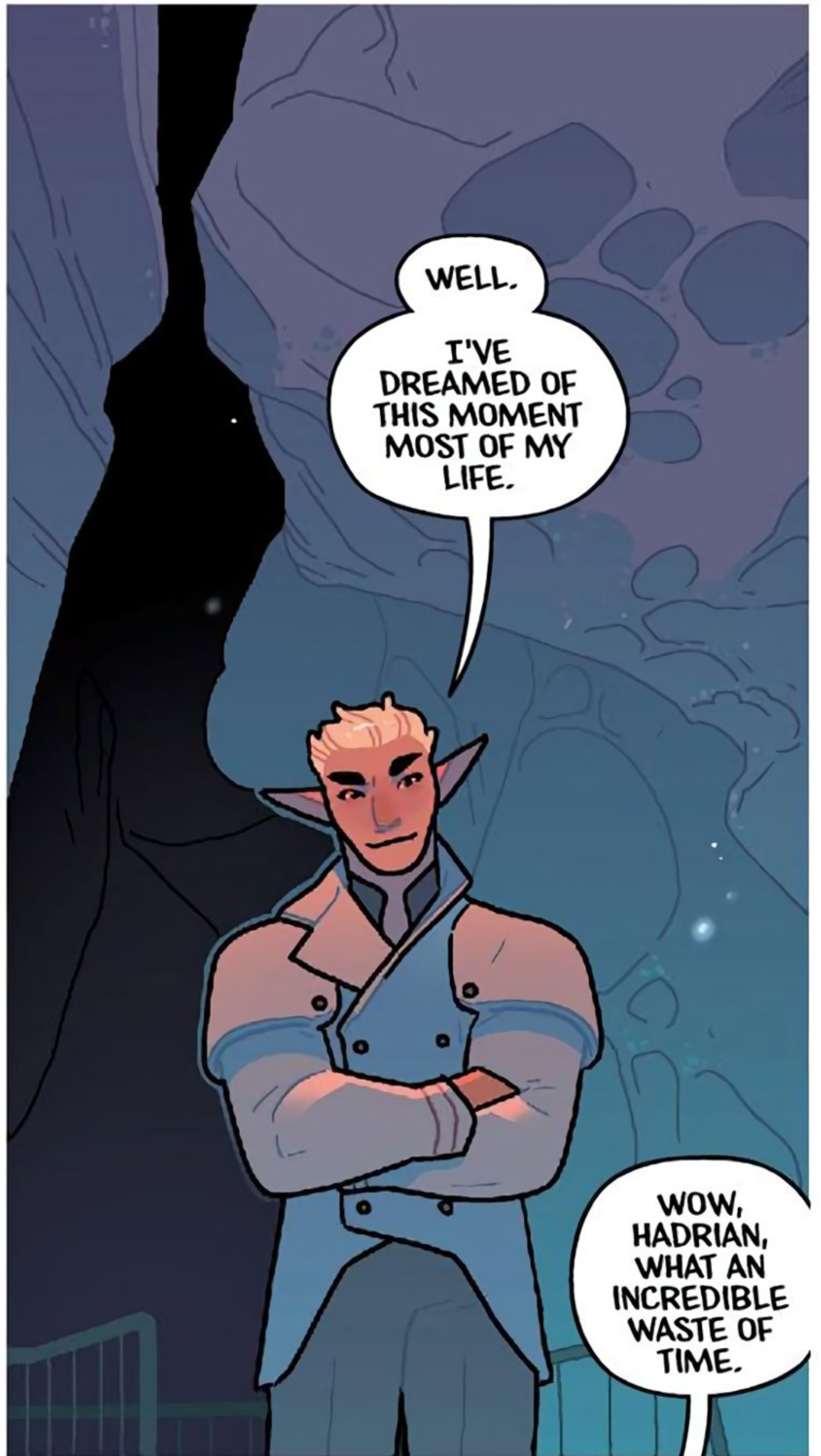
YES, THESE ARE THE OLDEST TUNNELS. DUG RIGHT INTO THE MOUNTAIN, THE BASE OF THE CASTLE, THOUGH THIS NORTH SIDE HAS BEEN ABANDONED SINCE I WAS A SMALL CHILD.

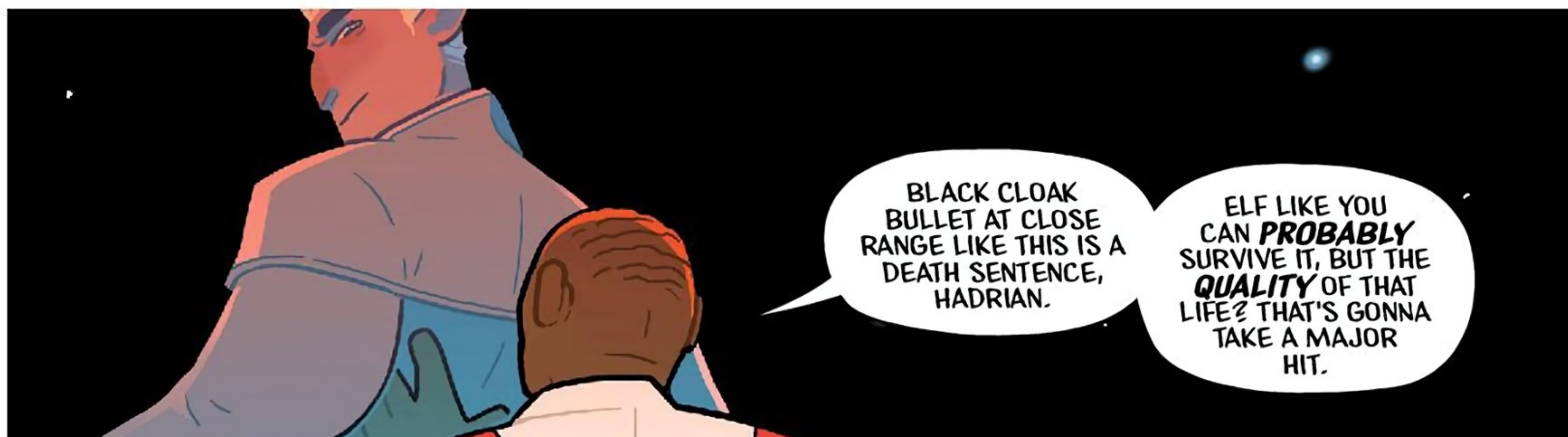
WE SHOULD BE RIGHT UNDER THE NORTH TOWER HERE, AND THIS SHOULD LINK UP WITH THE STAIRS TO THE BOWELS.

PLEASE DON'T REFER TO WHERE WE'RE HEADED AS "BOWELS."

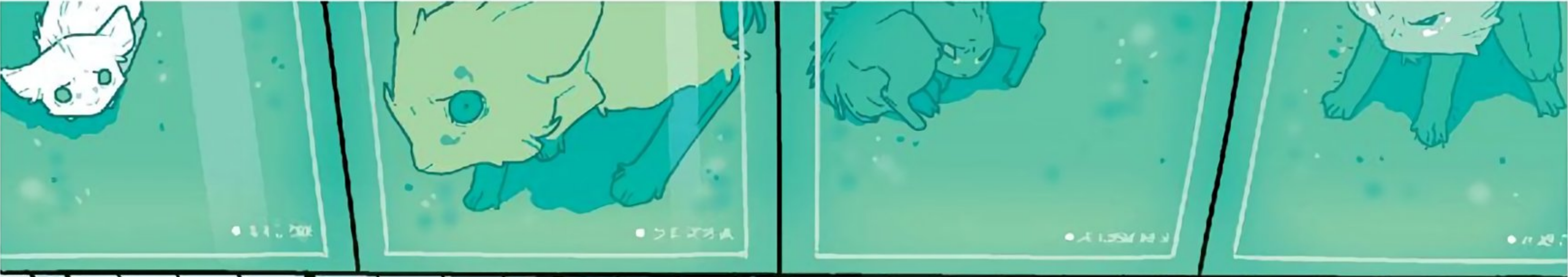
...FAIR.













THERE ARE HUNDREDS...MAYBE THOUSANDS.

WHO KNOWS HOW DEEP IT GOES, COULD BE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS.

...WHY?



I...I DON'T KNOW, BUT IT CANNOT POSSIBLY BE GOOD.



=GROAN=

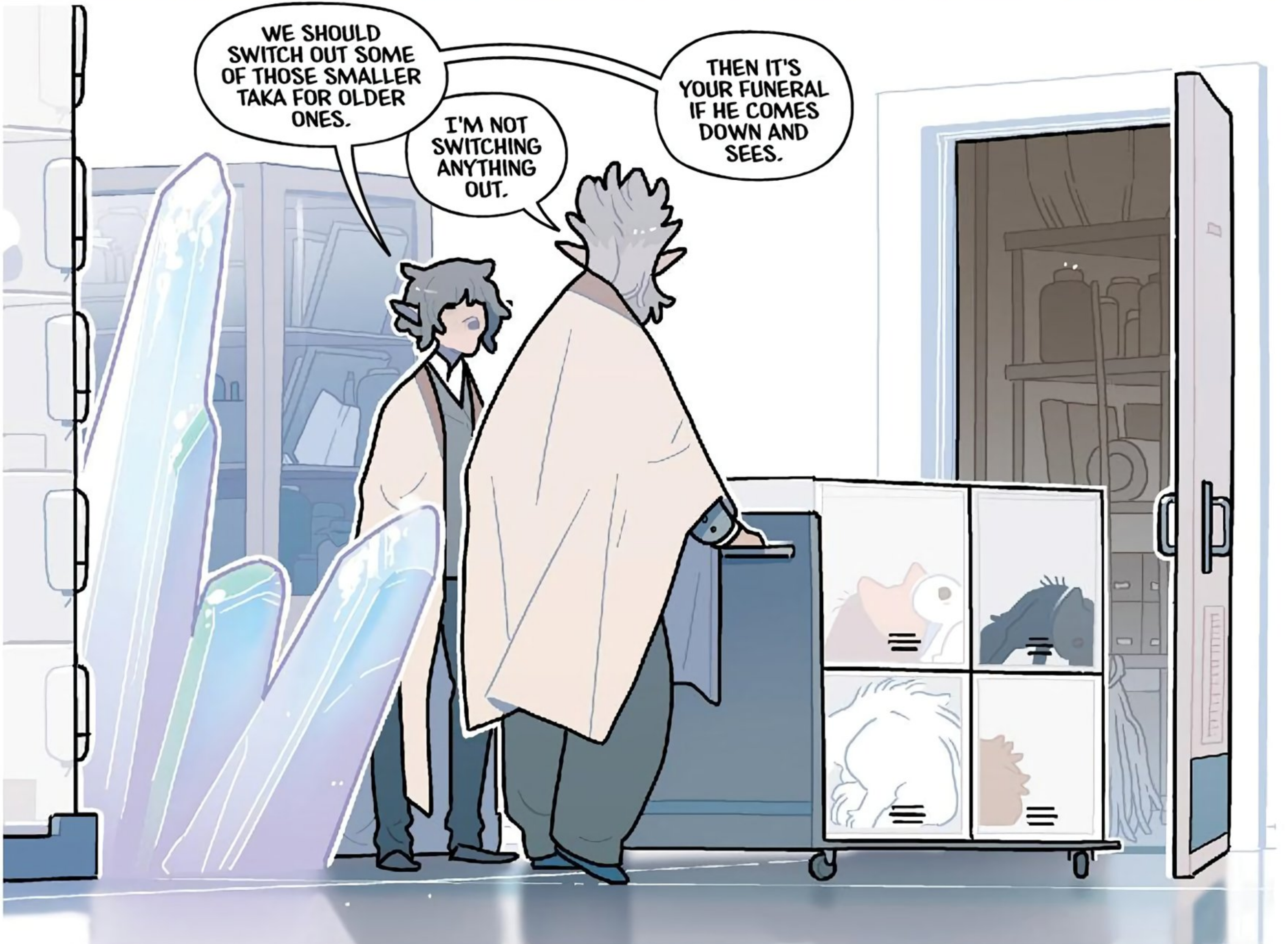
WE GOTTA MOVE HIM.

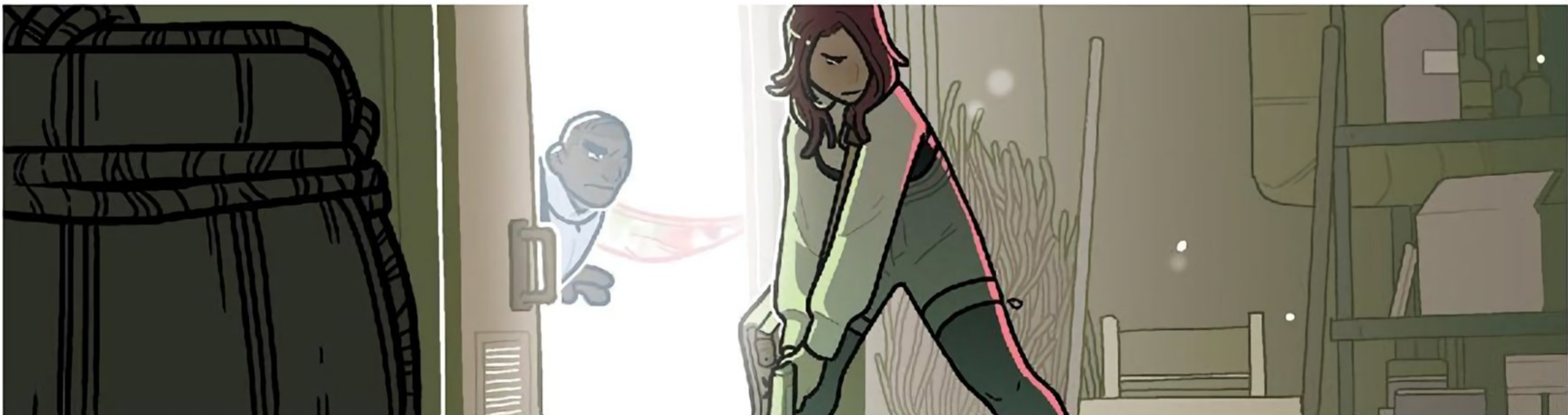
YEAH.



I THINK AROUND THAT BANK OF CAGES THERE'S MORE OF THAT OPAQUE CRYSTAL JUNK...MIGHT BE ABLE TO STASH HIM BEHIND IT.

DRAG

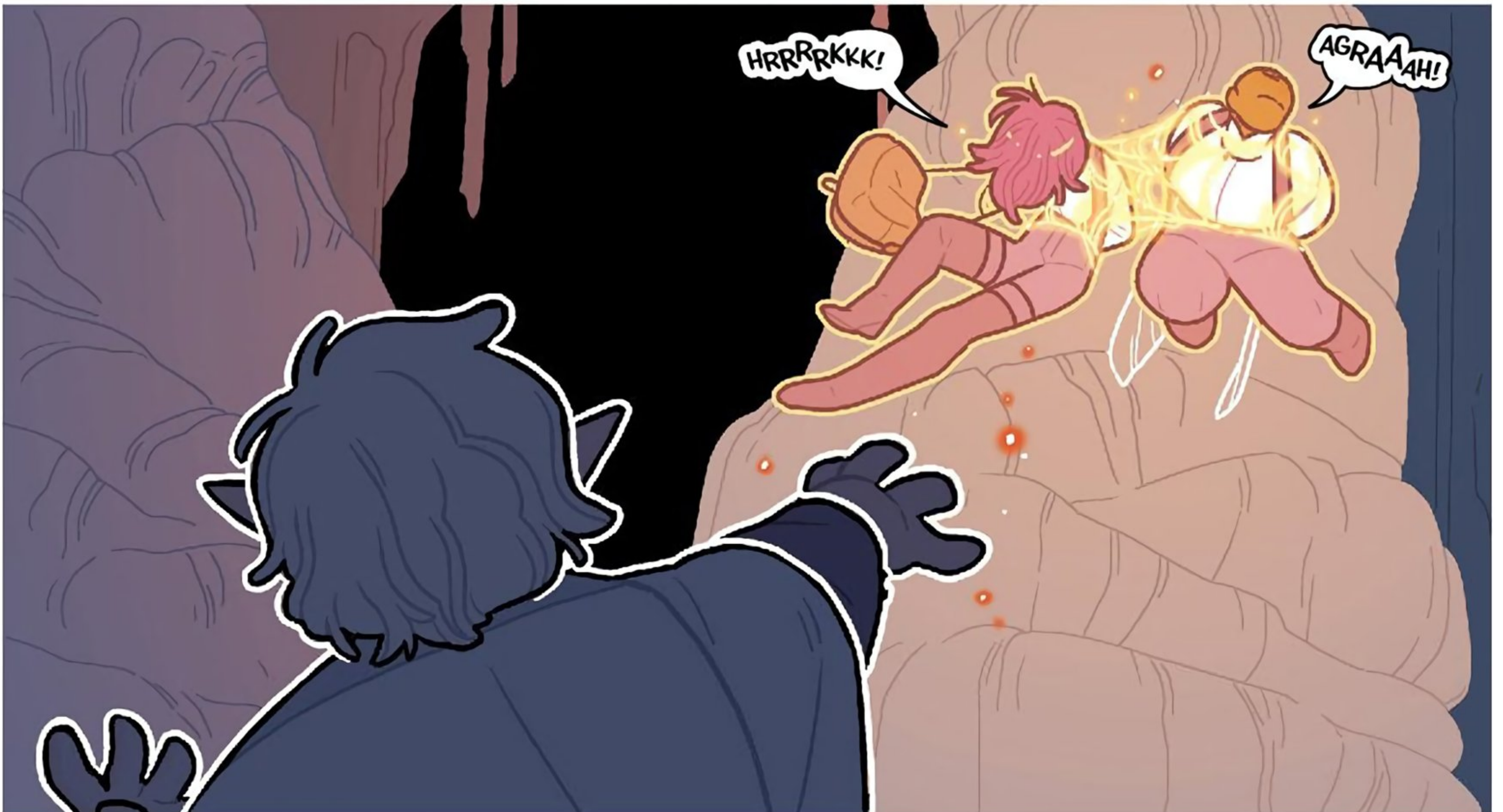


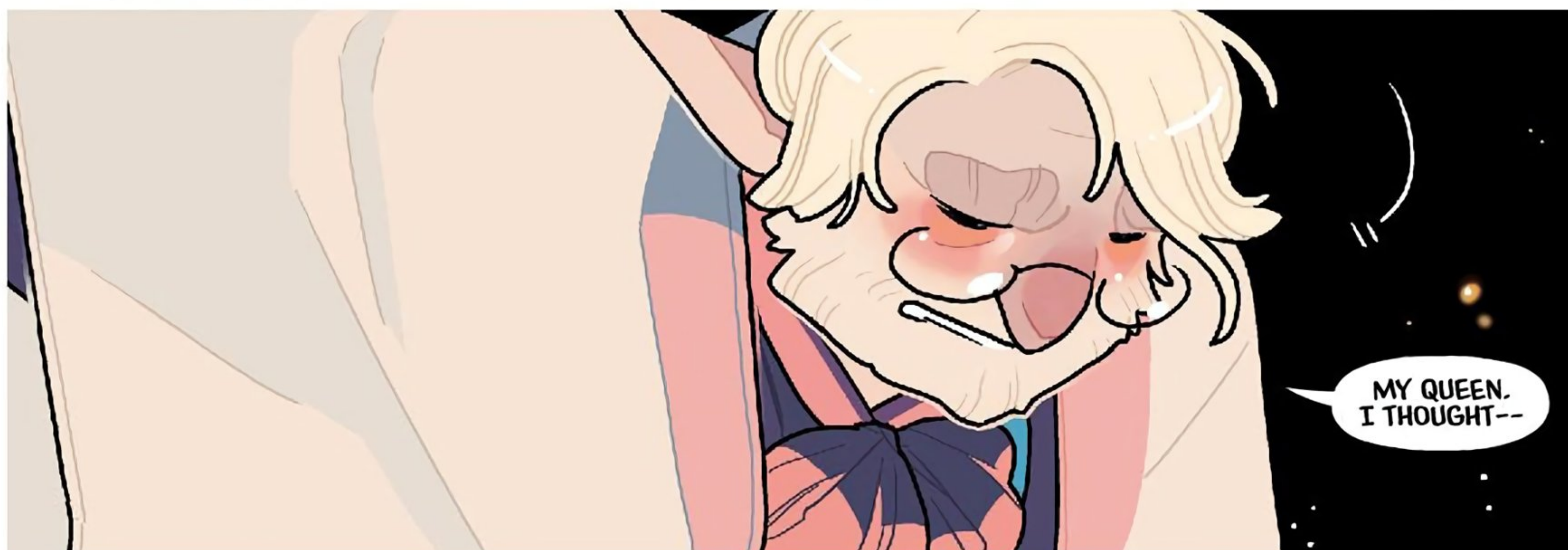








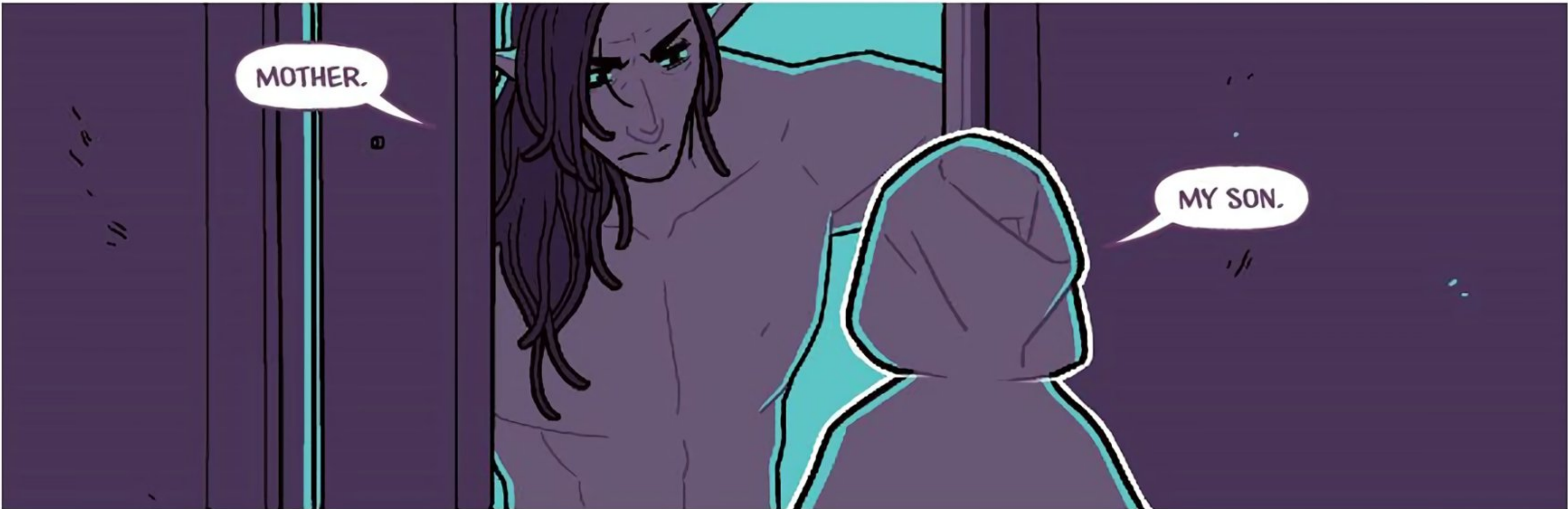








loc. >> 006.01
THE NARROWS.
SIX DAYS AGO.



MOTHER.

MY SON.



WE MUST
SPEAK.

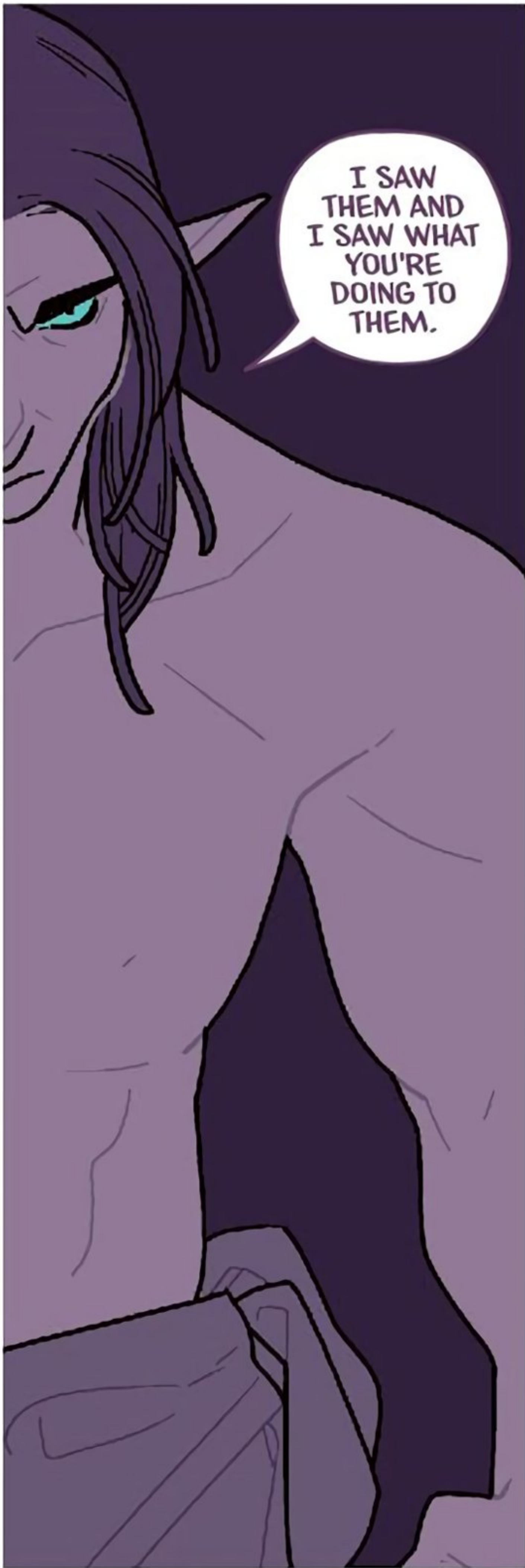
SO I
SEE.



I...I'LL GET
TO THE POINT I
SUPPOSE.

I KNOW
YOU'VE BEEN
DOWN INTO THE
OLD NORTH WING
CATACOMBS.

I KNOW
YOU'VE SEEN
THE TAKA.



I SAW THEM AND I SAW WHAT YOU'RE DOING TO THEM.



YES. WEEKS AGO YOU MADE THIS HORRIFIC DISCOVERY.
AND YET.



YOU HAVE TOLD NO ONE.

I--I AM STILL... I...

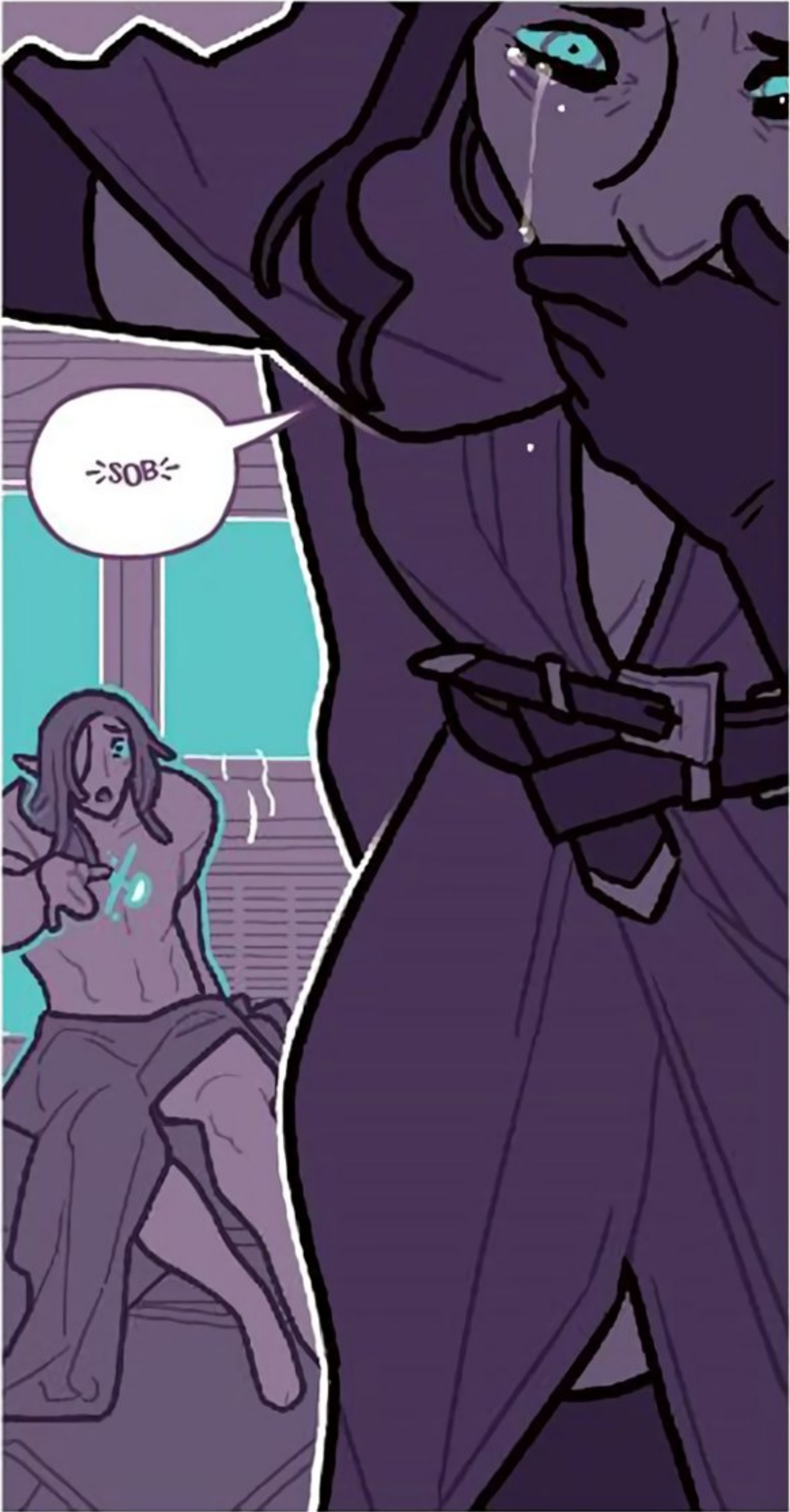


YOU ARE MY SON. AND OUR FUTURE KING. AND HOWEVER MUCH YOU RESIST IT, YOU **UNDERSTAND** THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CROWN.

NO DECISIONS ARE EASY, FREYAL. SOMEONE ALWAYS LOSES. THIS IS HOW IT IS.



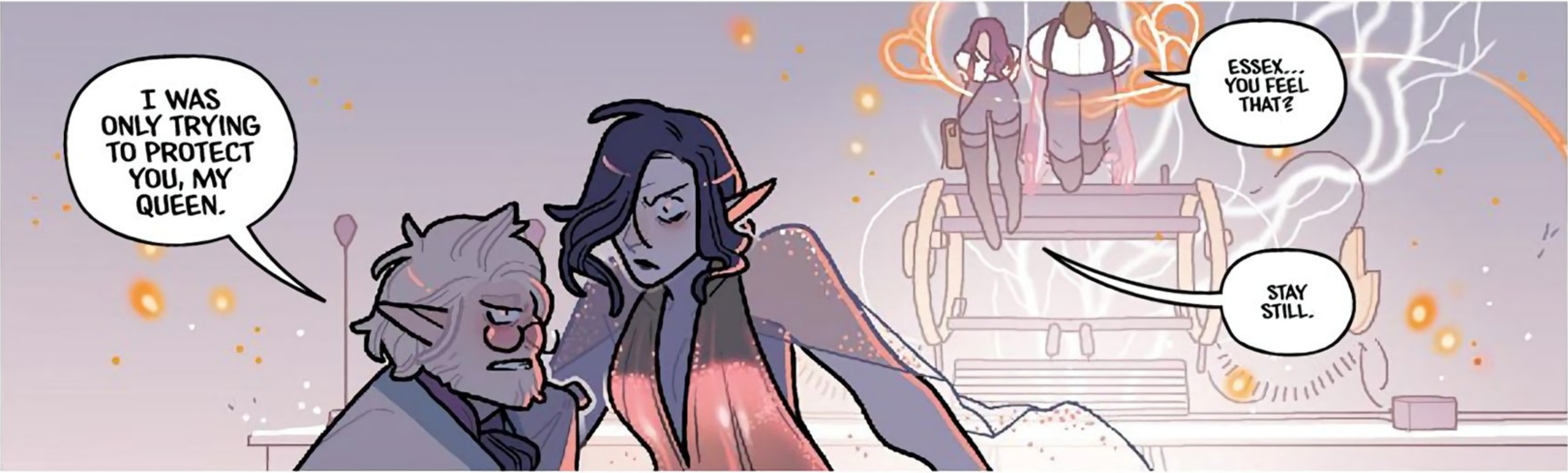
AND DO **YOU** EVER LOSE, MOTHER?





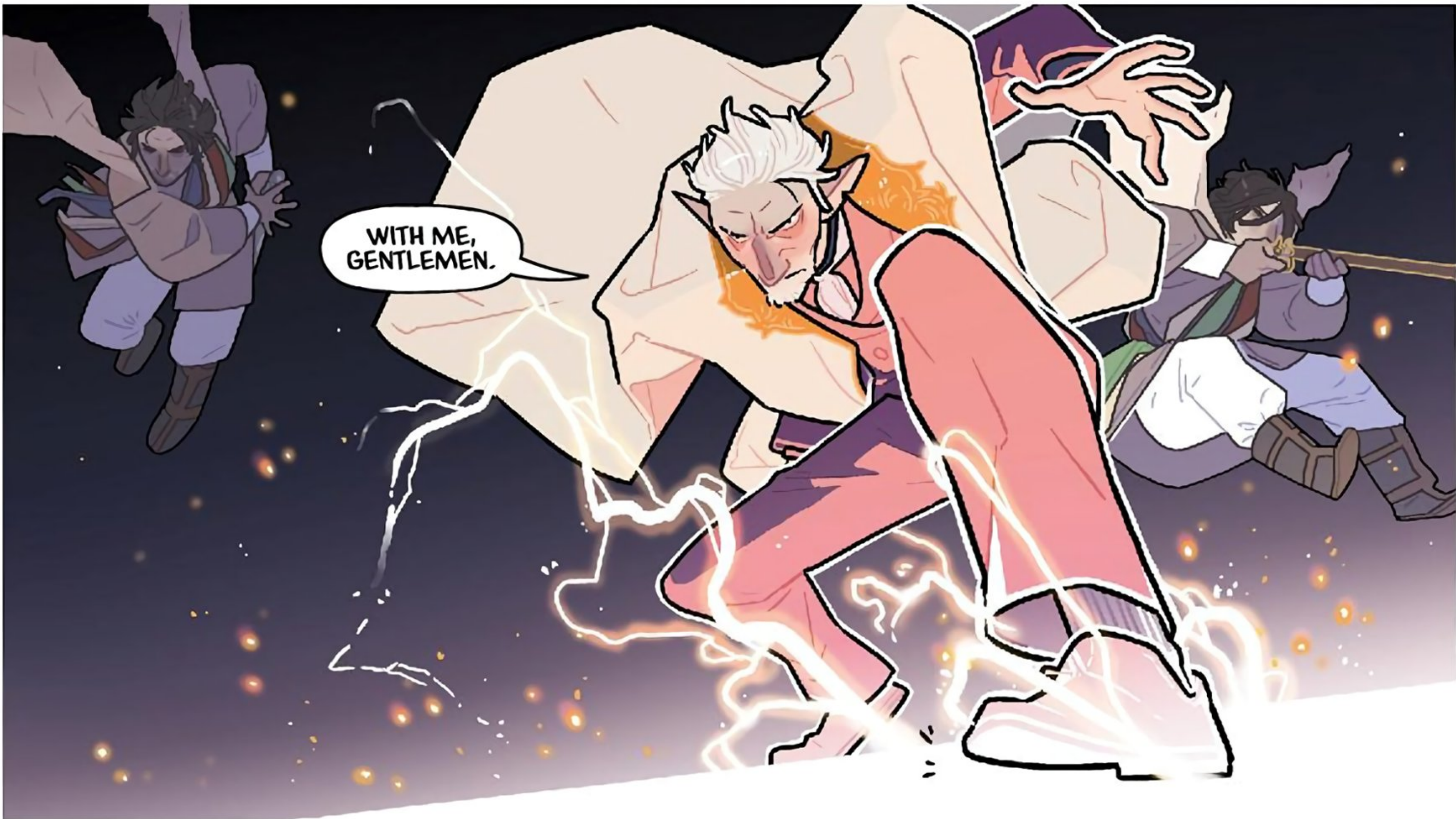
















0000F!

FZKKT

IVIDOR!



WE HAVE TO GET OUT THERE AND HELP VALORIE, CAN YOU--

DON'T TALK TO HER. SHE'S CONCENTRATING ON... I DON'T KNOW, JUDGING BY THE SYMBOLS...

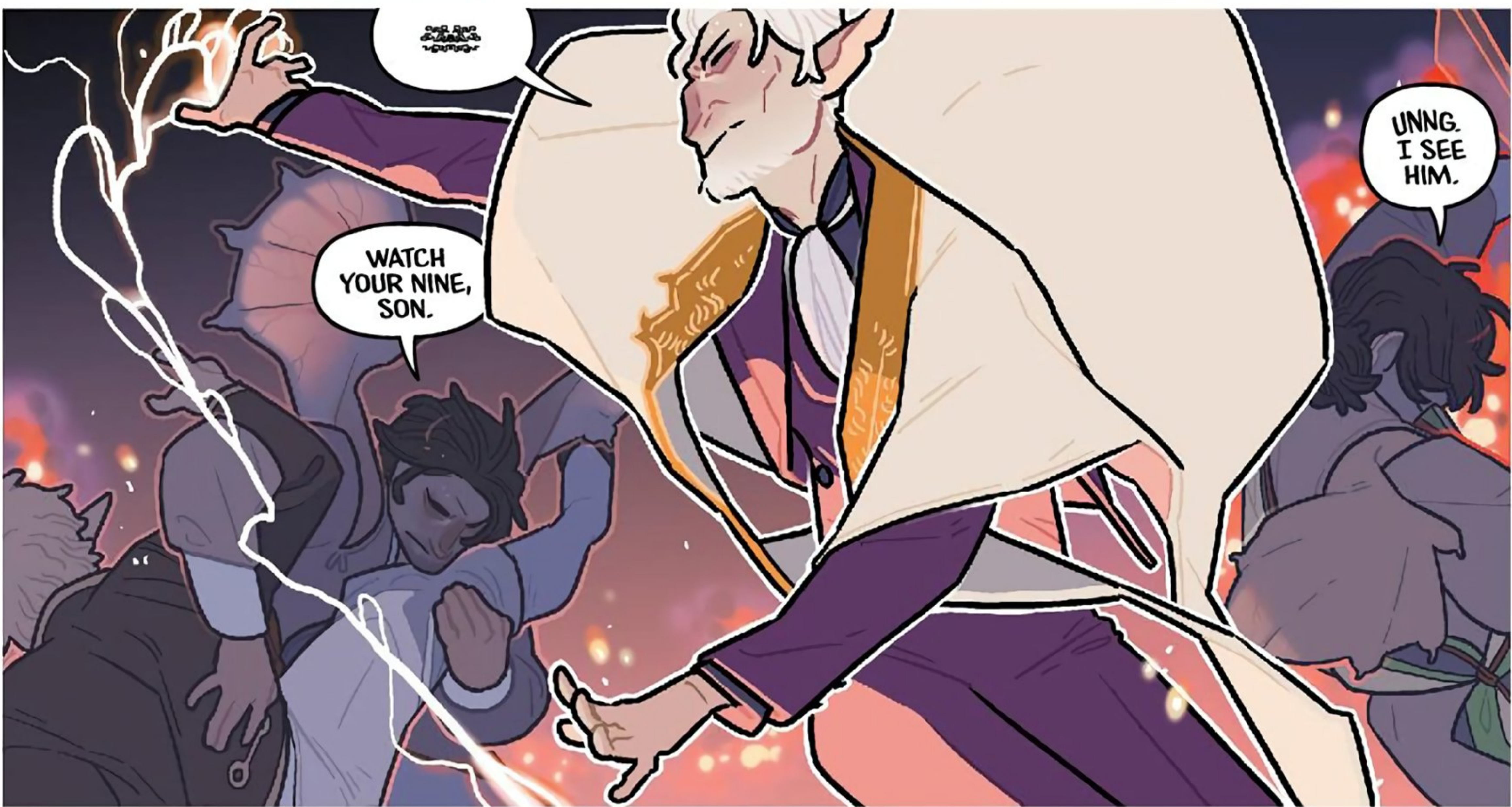
...LOOKS LIKE PERSONAL SHIELDING FOR US MAYBE?



WELL I DON'T HATE THAT. BUT WE STILL NEED A PLAN, ESSEX.

WE HAVE TO DESTROY THAT DEVICE.

WAIT... WHAT?



0000F!

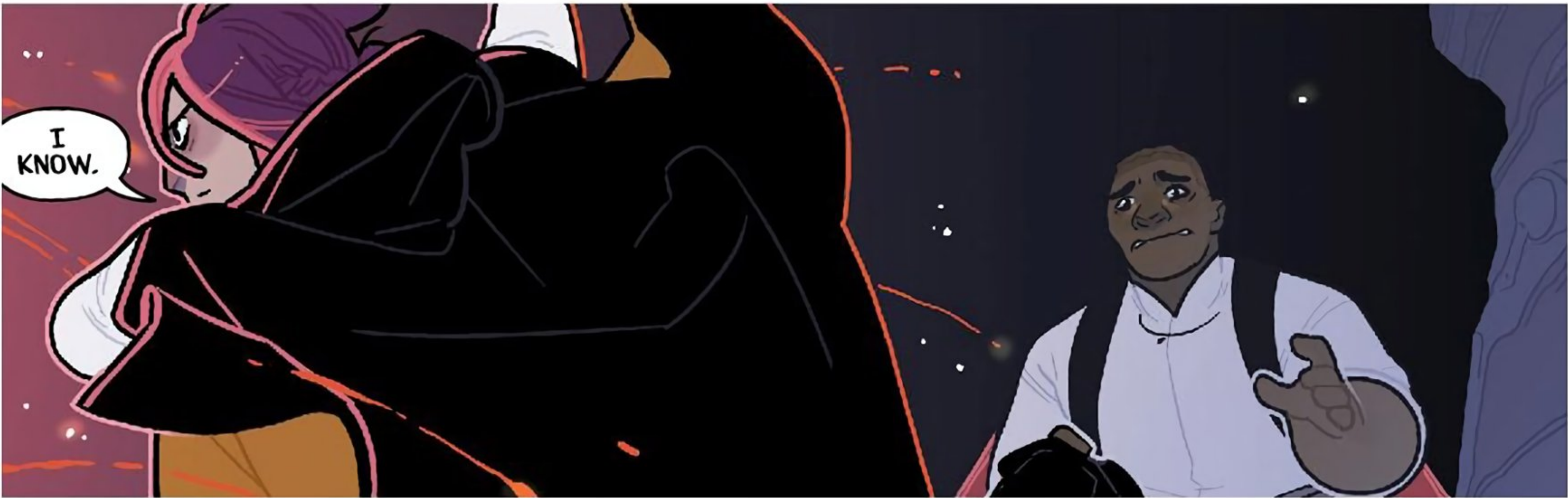
WATCH YOUR NINE, SON.

UNNG. I SEE HIM.



DESTROYING THE DEVICE IS THE ONLY WAY, THERON.

BUT THAT MAGIC... IT'S POWERING THE CITY. WITHOUT IT... PHAEDRA...









BULLSHIT.



PERHAPS "FALL" IS TOO EXTREME. BUT JUST IMAGINE IT FOR A MOMENT...THIS CITY WITHOUT ENOUGH MAGIC.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THAT LOOKS LIKE, DETECTIVE? HOW MANY MECHANISMS WILL FAIL? HOW MANY FIGHTS WILL BREAK OUT WHEN NO ONE SPEAKS THE SAME LANGUAGE? HOW MANY STRUCTURES WILL COLLAPSE?

WHERE DOES *YOUR* FAMILY LIVE, DETECTIVE?



PAX, DON'T LISTEN TO HER!

SHE'S LYING!

THERE HAS TO BE ANOTHER WAY, ESSEX! THIS CITY NEEDS MAGIC TO SURVIVE! IF WE CUT OFF ACCESS TO THAT MAGIC...SO MANY PEOPLE WILL DIE.



...YES. SOME PEOPLE ARE GOING TO DIE.

WE'RE FIGHTING FOR OUR FUTURE HERE, PAX!

IF WE DON'T DO THIS NOW, THEY'LL BURY ALL OF US AND EVERYTHING WE KNOW DOWN HERE.



THIS IS OUR ONE CHANCE TO PULL IT DOWN!

I CAN'T RISK INNOCENT LIVES, ESSEX!

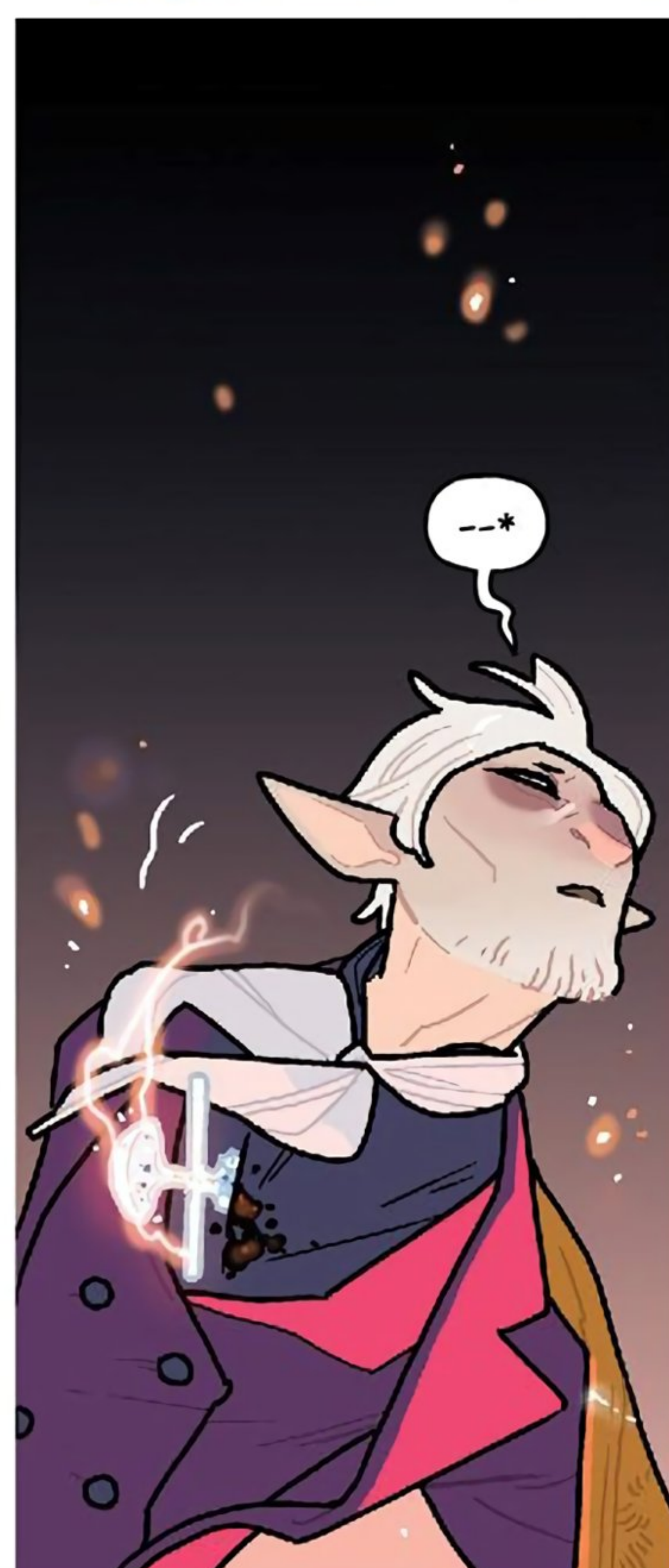
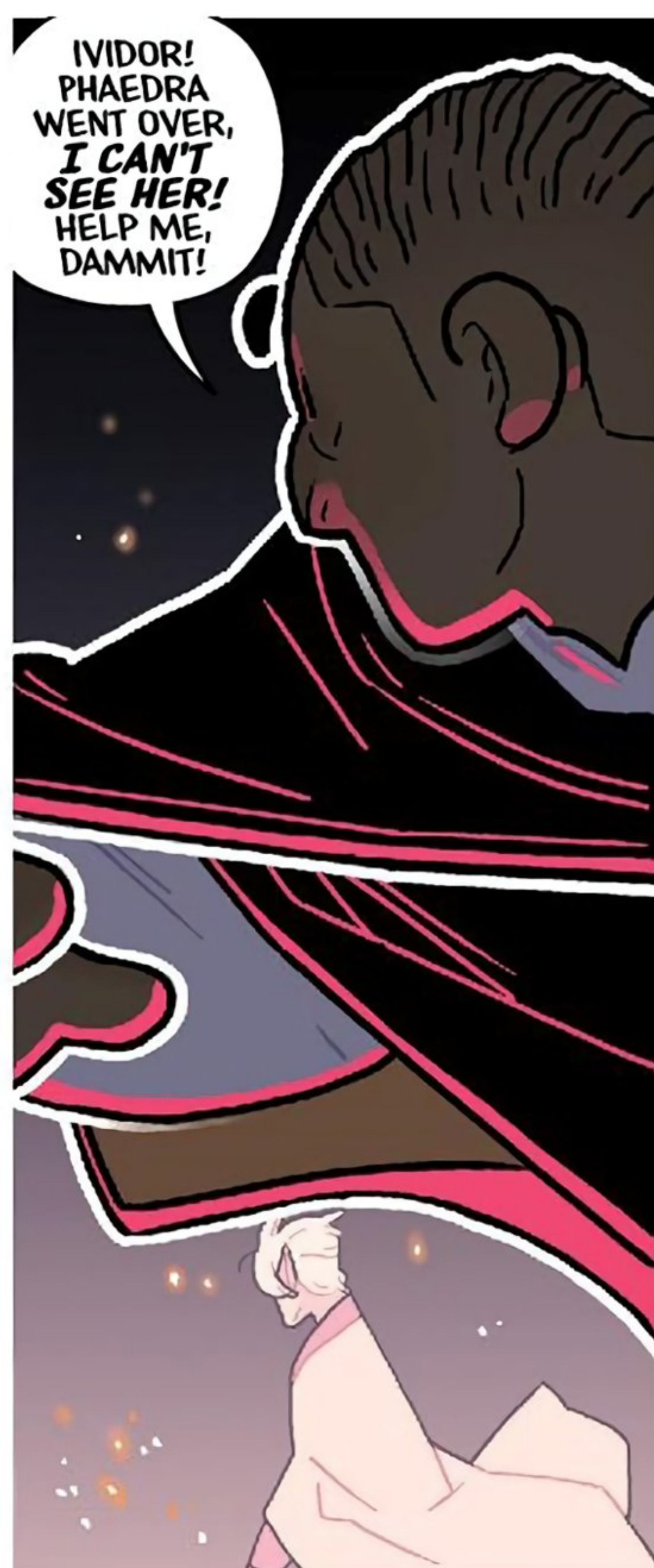
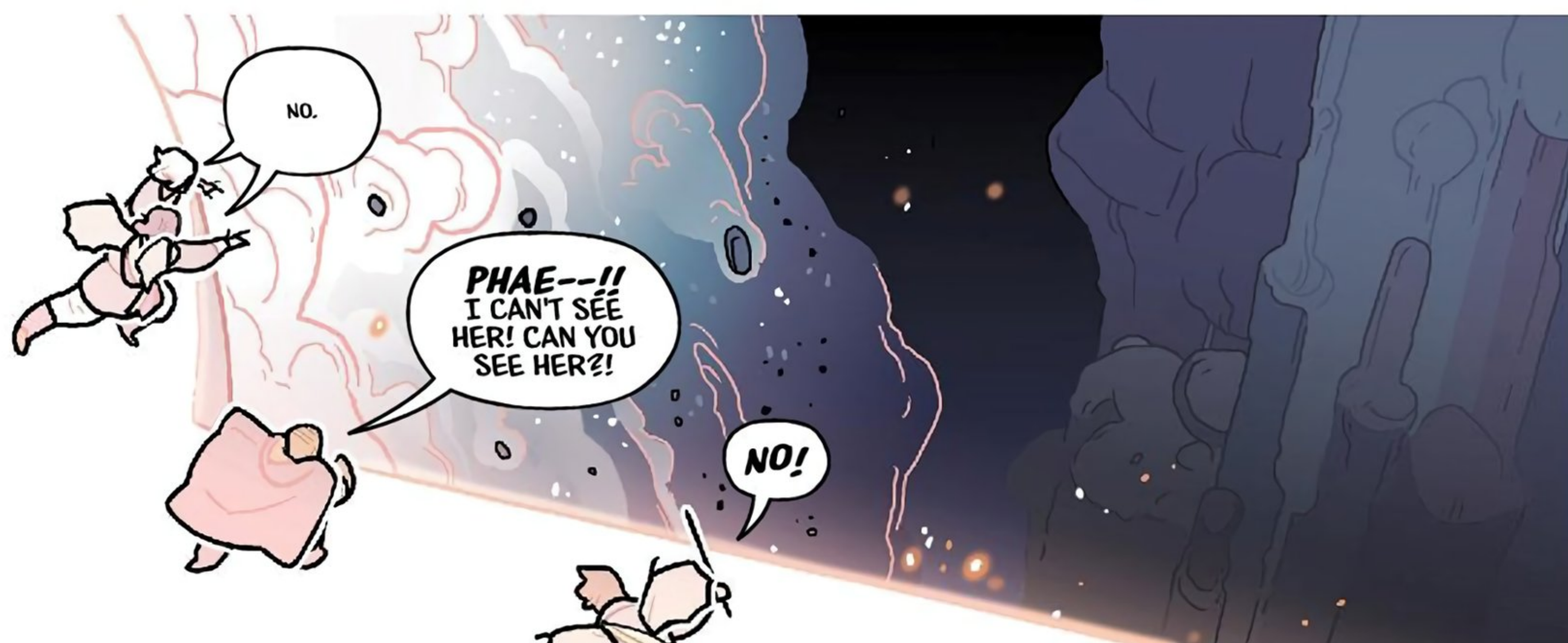
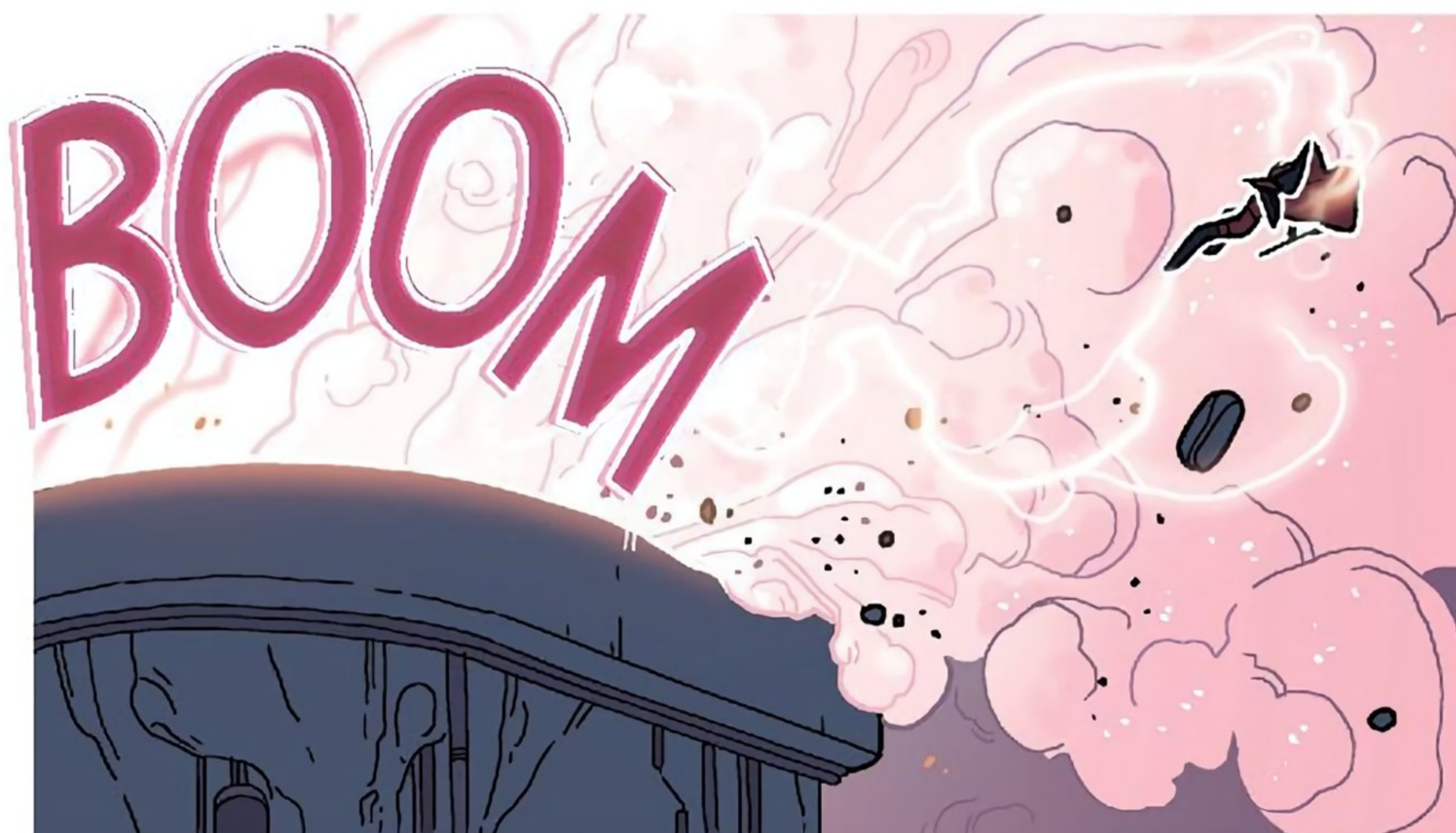
AND WHAT ARE THE TAKA?!

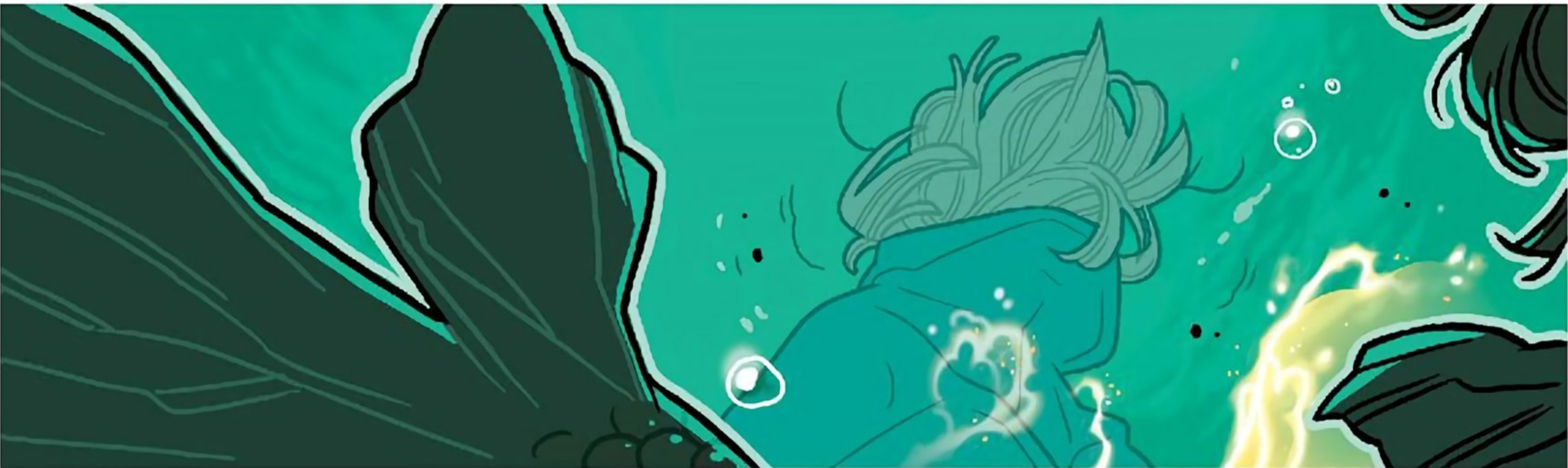
WE CAN'T BUILD A WORLD ON THE BLOOD OF THE INNOCENT, THERON.

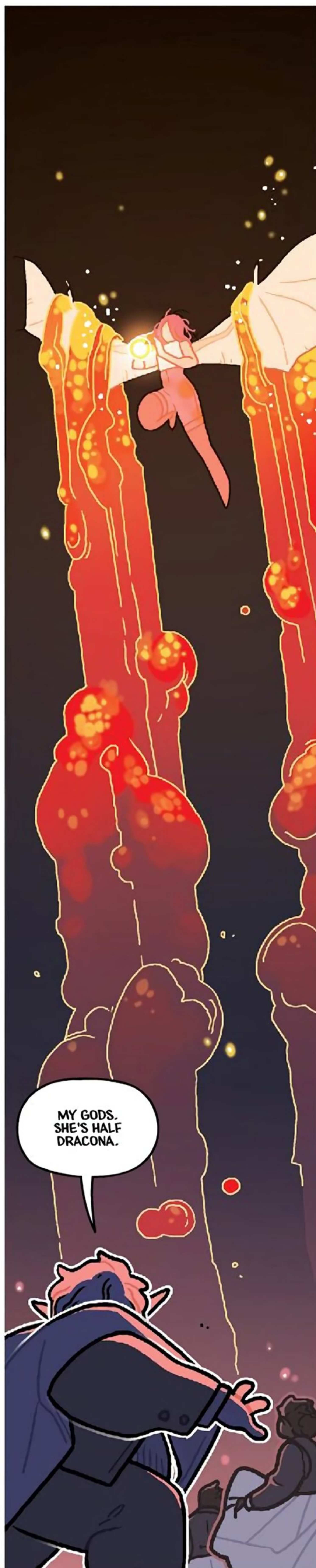
THAT'S NO WORLD AT ALL!





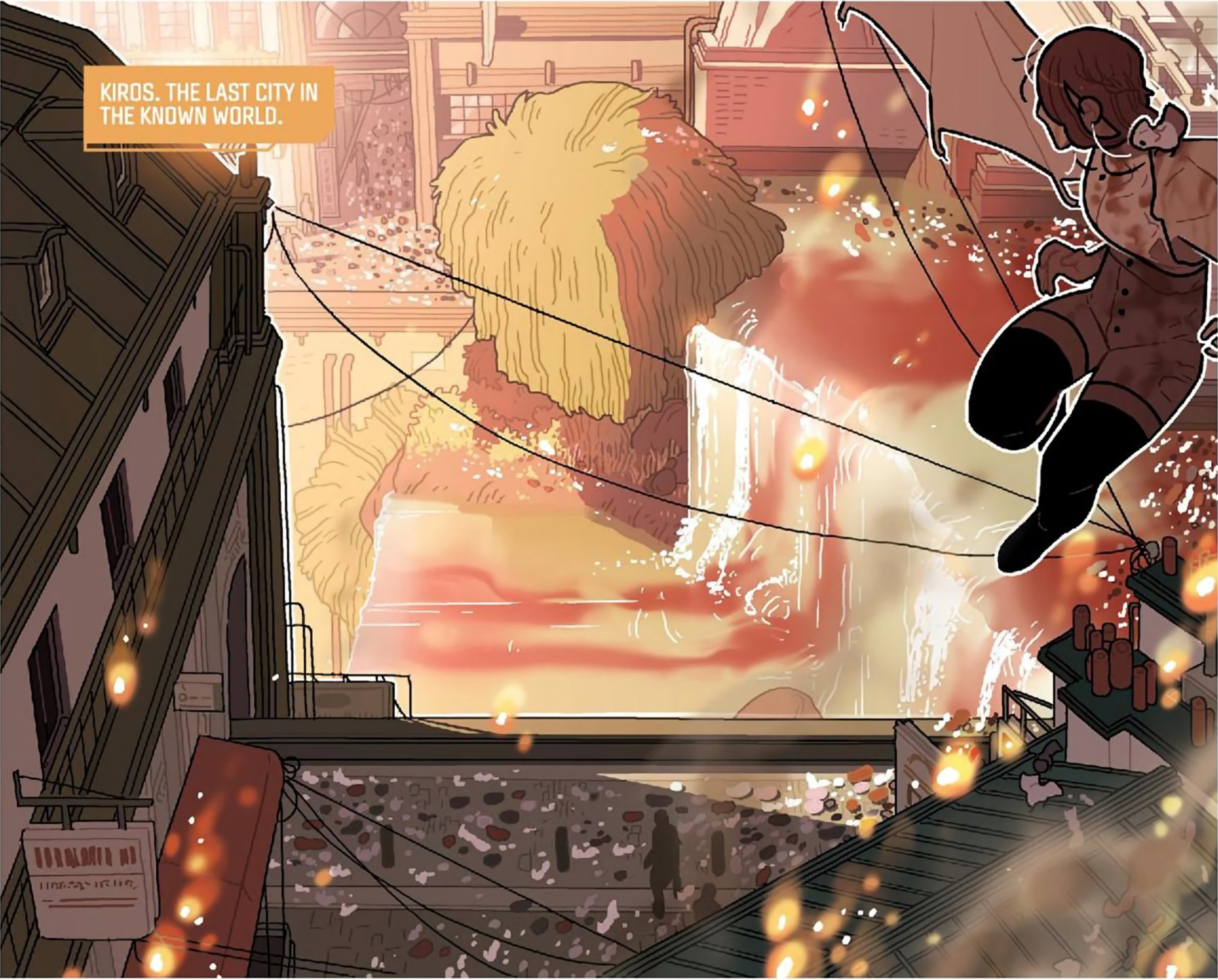














YEARS AGO THERE WAS
A WORLD-ENDING WAR.

BUT VICTORY WAS
SNATCHED FROM THE
JAWS OF DEFEAT.

THE GREAT EVIL
WAS VANQUISHED.

THE KINGDOM WAS
UNITED IN PEACE.

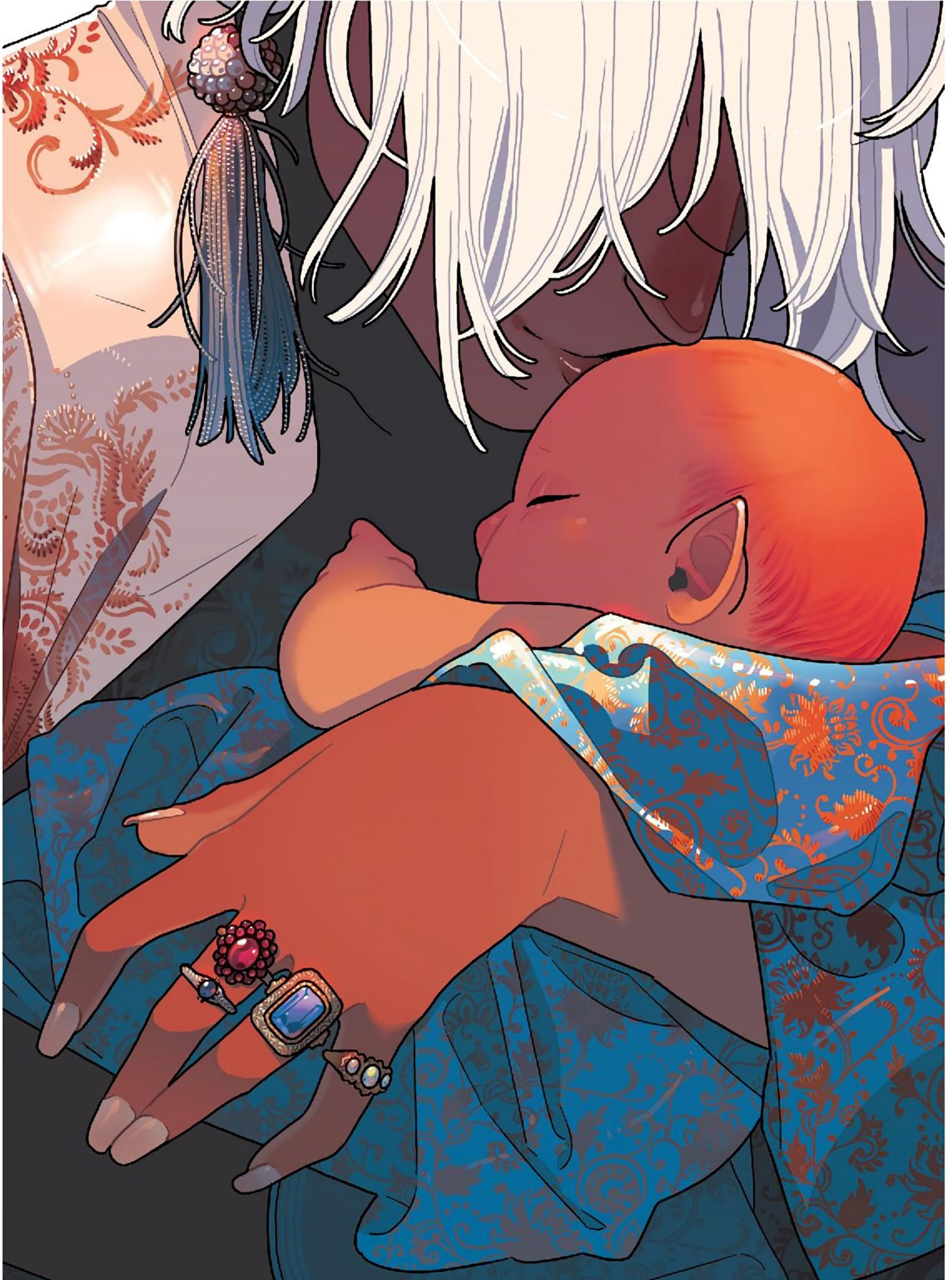
NOW, KIROS' TERRIBLE
SECRETS UNEARTHED,
IT HAS BEEN PLUNGED
INTO CHAOS.

...IT'S A
GOOD START.

end of arc.

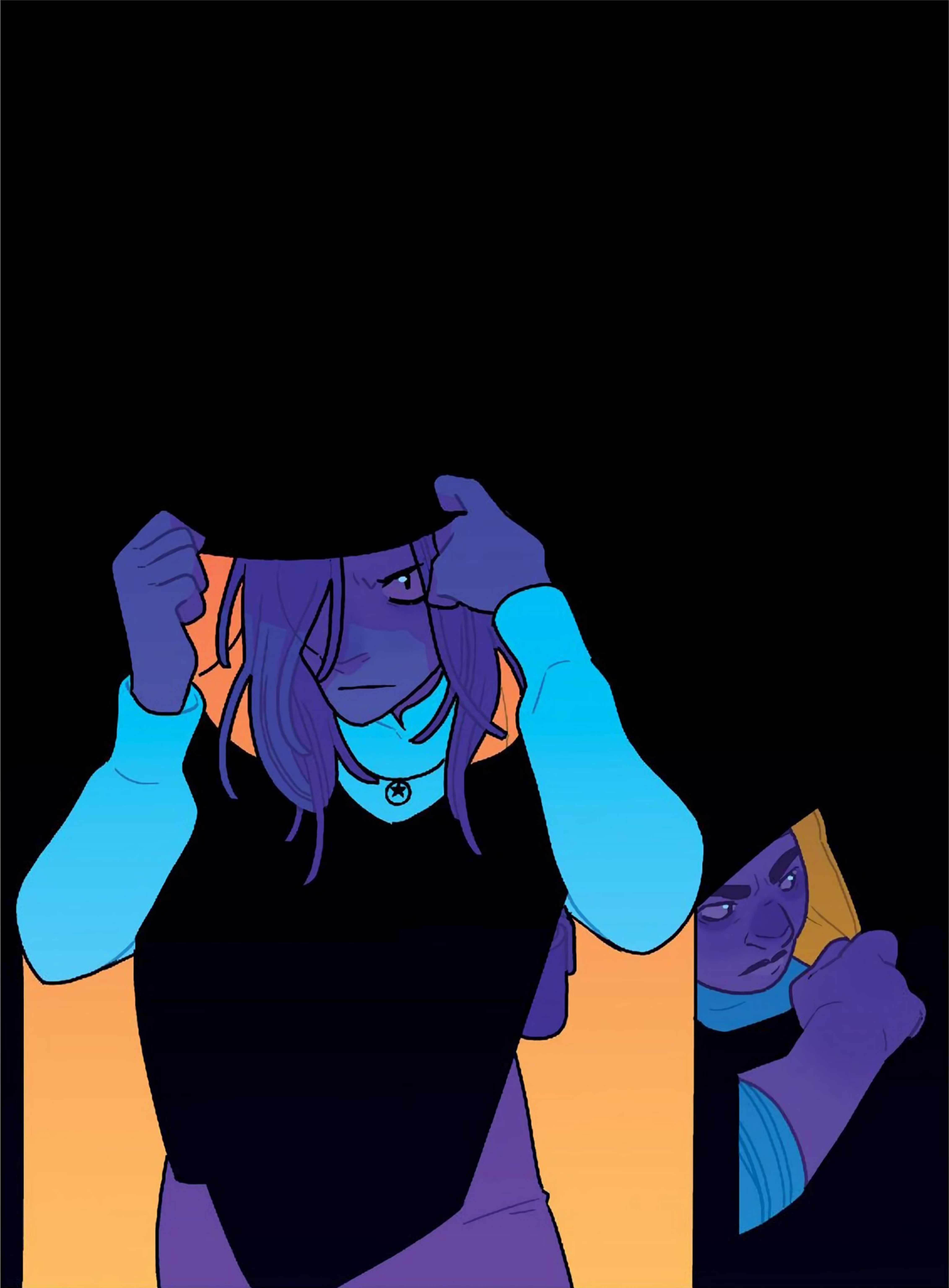
>> 01

MEREDITH MCCLAREN
BLACK CLOAK COVER GALLERY





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"Combines elements of sci-fi, fantasy, and noir into something wholly original and compelling. Move over, *Saga*. This is my new obsession."

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This extra-length trade collects **BLACK CLOAK #1-6, the first arc of the series.**



RATED T+/TEEN PLUS | SF/FANTASY

DR. VINK

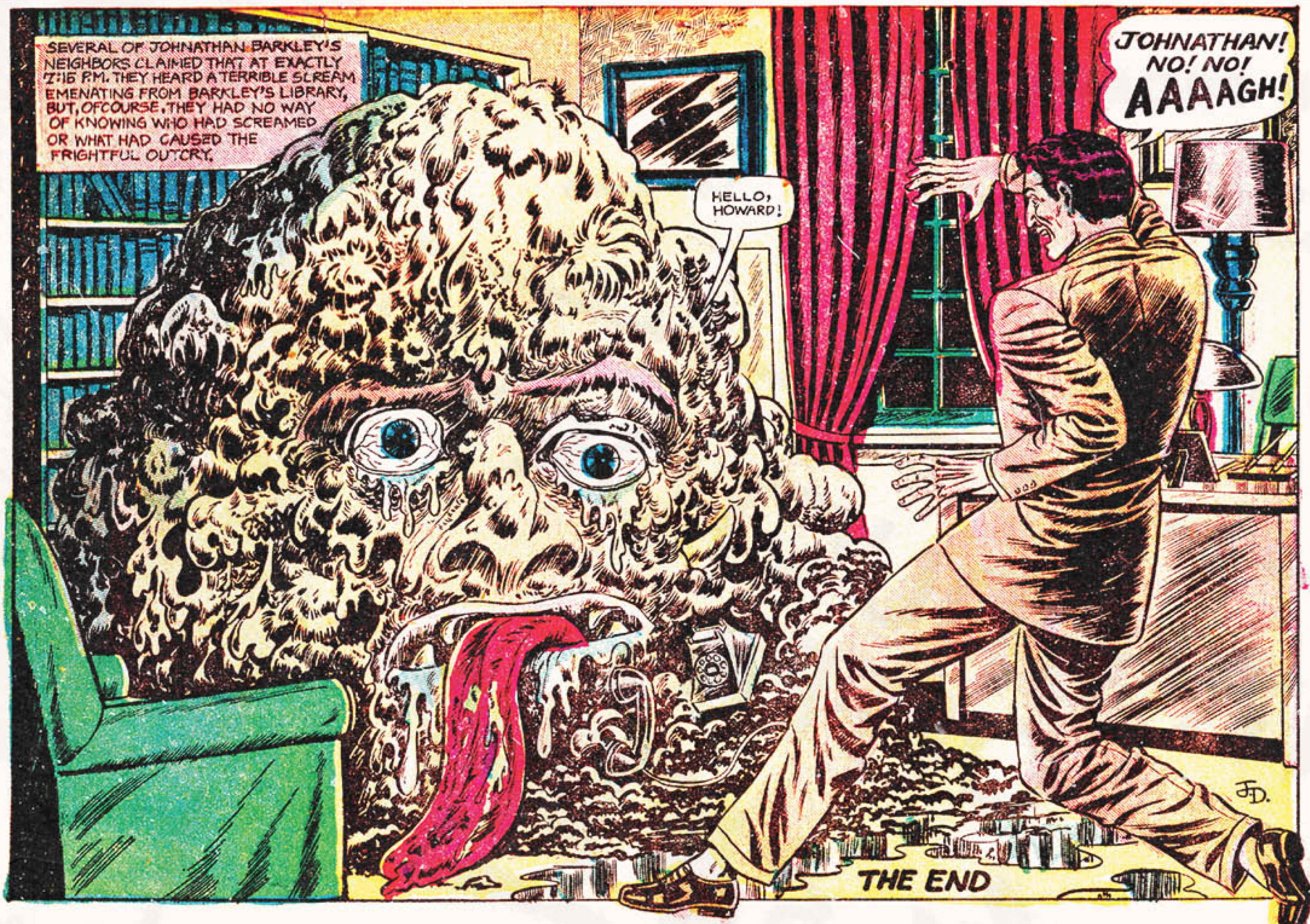
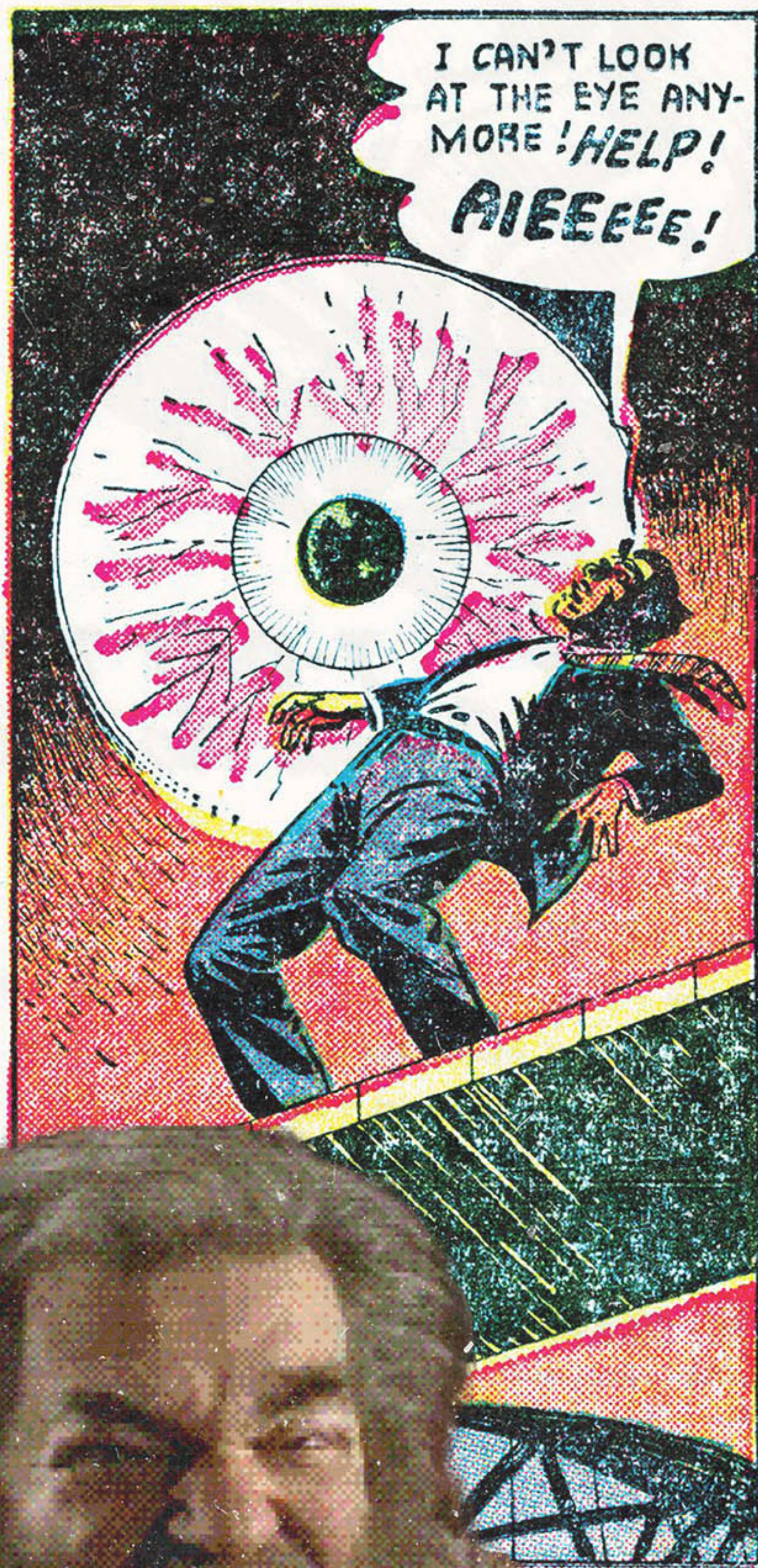
WITH A VA-VA-VA

A DR. VINK POOR MAN'S RIP

- RIPPIN POORLY SINCE MAY 2022 -

LIBRARY LOANS THROUGH HOOPLA + OVERDRIVE
COMIXOLOGY / AMAZON PRIME READING + KINDLE

RIPPED WITH CALIBRE DEDRM AND AI UPSCALED WITH WAIFU2X-CAFFE



...AND I AM NOT A NUT BAG



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